chagrin of Ms. Donovan, the music teacher who had accompanied Mr. D's class took that state of affairs as an opportunity to extend her musical presentation. With diasppointment in her voice, Ms. Donovan later confided that the music had taken twice as long as she had expected. The result was that opportunities for pen pal interaction in the activity centers had been truncated. After much preparation and planning, it was not clear when Mr. D's class departed on their bus at 1:55 how the meeting had gone (Field Notes, 3/10/80). A few days later, Ms. Donovan's assessment was more positive, but it is notable that she did not have particular long range plans for the Pen Pal activity beyond a visit to Stone School:

> Ms. Donovan: The Pen Pals visit went well, because our Room Twelve kids planned what they wanted to do. The visiting teacher from the other school thought our kids were wonderful. Most kids got along with their pen pals or ignored them (except Lisa, because she's so bossy). Some exchanged telephone numbers, but I'm not sure whether any will continue writing--maybe just those who really like each other will continue. The visit was enjoyable--it really didn't seem like there were fifty kids in the room. We talked about a reciprocal visit to Stone School in April and lamented the fact that we can't walk there because of the dangerous intersection en route.
>
> Interviewer: Is the pen pals activity finished now for you?
>
> Ms. Donovan: No, I'm still going to continue to have them write. It's real important to learn how to get to know someone else through letter correspondence. We'll continue at least until we visit Stone School.
>
> Interviewer: Then will it be over?
>
> Ms. Donovan: Who knows? I can't say when it will be over for some kids. (Interview Notes, 3/11/80)

While the writing helper may have planted the seed and Ms. Donovan and Mr. D were the purveyors of an environment supportive

of the pen pals, Ms. Donovan's comments above highlight the fact that to a great extent the fate of the pen pal relationships would be in the hands of the students. Yet the pen pal visit to Conley School was an event replete with opportunities for enrichment of the correspondence. As we shall see, the children exploited that event in their subsequent correspondence.

The pen pal visit had all of the trappings of a major school/community event. In addition to the large number of students gathered in one place, five staff members, one of whom was the principal of Conley School, were involved in its undertaking. Many school resources were made available for the occasion--the reading aid was free to help, the school was opened to groups of touring pen pals, a school bus was provided for Mr. D's class, and time was made in the regular school day not only for this event, but for the planning and preparation that preceeded it. Such a commitment of resources, combined with the participation of important adults, highlighted both the event and the pen pal relationships as very special.

The pen pal visit resembled other special occasions and celebrations that occur both at home and at school in the lives of the East Eden children. There was sharing of food and music specially prepared for the occasion. The Conley chidren marked the event with a formal welcoming speech as well as with tours and games. The children from Stone School performed music for their hosts and also provided an opportunity for both groups of children to sing together by their addition of several familiar rounds to the performance.

The sharing of food, the playing of games, and the singing were occasions both for the meeting of individual pairs of pen pals and for the coming together of the classes as a large group. The pen pal visit was sufficiently important to warrant its sharing in the monthly letter to families written by Ms. Donovan:

> On Monday the class had a special treat--they were able to meet their pen pals from Mr. Donizetti's second grade class. We have been writing back and forth for about a month and this was the first time we got to meet each other. Each child chose the activity s/he wanted to do with her/his pal. The afternoon ended with the children from Stone presenting their music program they had practiced for the residents of Colonial House. I know your child could tell you which part s/he liked best. (Letter to Families, 3/12/80).

The pen pal visit potentially served important social functions that enabled the writing relationships to grow. It marked the existence of those relationships as special and important, it gave the authors an opportunity to meet and to share a common experience with their audience, it gave many students new things about which to write, and it set up the promise of a subsequent reunion at Stone School. An examination of the letters that followed the visit helps to show the importance of coming to know one's audience in such a special way.

Getting to Know Your Audience

Less than two weeks after the pen pals visit, Ms. Donovan reported the following in an interview:

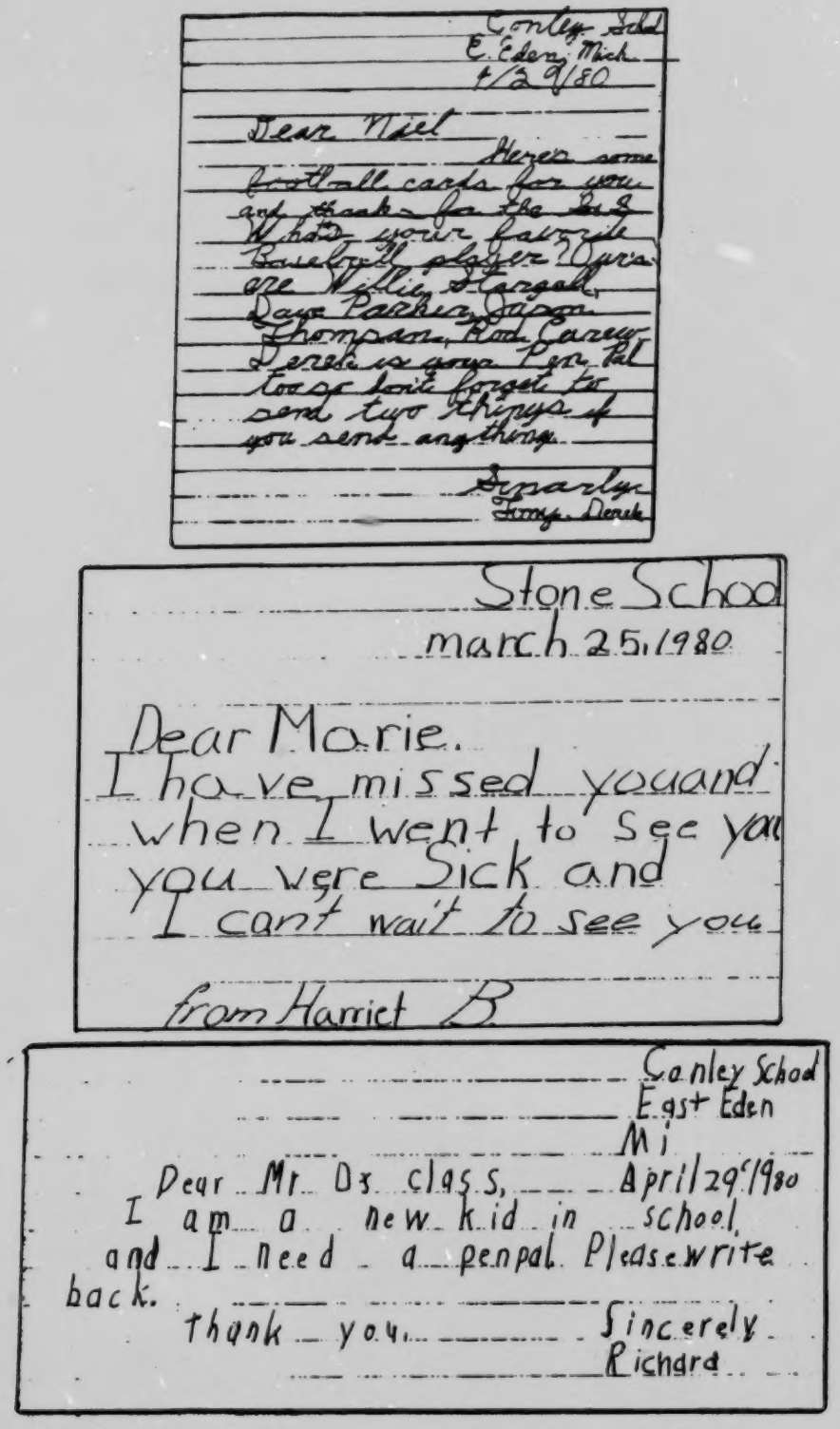
> Writing is going well. The kids received pen pal letters and wrote back right away. The kids are moving beyond basic informational questions like "What is your telephone number?" and "Do you have any pets?" to other topics. All the students are

> getting the idea about the letter heading and other format features of a friendly letter. (Interview, 3/31/80)

All of the pen pals were writing now, and social relations were being worked out. The changes in relationship between pen pals that were stimulated by their visit had implications for the nature and complexity of the letters they wrote. Derek, for example, who had balked at the writing when assigned to a girl pen pal, resolved his problem during the visit. He met the pen pal of his best friend and decided to share him (see Figure 11). To enable this, Jane, another member of Ms. Donovan's class and a prolific writer, agreed to have two pen pals. And so she began to write to the girl who had formerly been assigned to Derek.

Further evidence of the students' concern for the fledgling writing relationships--that each person have one and that they grow--were manifest in two letters that followed the pen pal visit. In one letter, a student from Mr. D's class who arrived at Conley School to find that her pen pal was absent writes to affirm their relationship and expresses hope that they will meet in the future (see Figure 11). In the second, a student new to Ms. Donovan's class who arrived after the visit writes an open letter to Mr. D's class soliciting a pen pal (see Figure 11).

Letter writing proliferated after the pen pals' visit. The corpus of letters exchanged in April and May was large. It included at least two letters from each student. The letters differed from the earliest ones in a number of ways. Most obviously, the letters became longer. In addition, students generally began to delete the



Conley Schol
E. Eden, Mich
4/29/80

Dear Niel

Heres some football cards for you and thank for the last. Whats your favorite baseball player? Ours are Willie Stargell, Dave Parker, Jason Thompson, Rod Carew. Heres your pen pal too. I forgot to send two things if you send anything.

Sincerly
Tony, Derek

Stone Schod
march 25, 1980

Dear Marie.
I have missed youand when I went to see you you were sick and I cant wait to see you.

from Harriet B

Conley School
East Eden
Mi
April 29, 1980

Dear Mr. Ds class,
I am a new kid in school and I need a penpal. Please write back.

Thank you. Sincerely
Richard

Figure 11. Working out social relationships in letters.

formality of last names when signing the letters after the meeting. There were notable changes in the materials used to construct the letters. While earlier letters were written on lined school paper--wide lines for the second graders, narrower for the third--students were now using their own looseleaf notebook paper or unlined paper on which they wrote and drew pictures. In the earliest letters there had been some exchange of photographs. This continued for many students (although one student wrote after the visit, "You didn't have to give me your picher because I know what you look like."). After the pen pal visit there was the additional exchange of gifts. Some students now closed their letters with "Love" or "Your friend."

Examination of the letters exchanged in April and May reveals the following general purposes served:

1. exchanging gifts,
2. commenting on the visit,
3. describing school life,
4. exchanging home addresses and telephone numbers,
5. describing life outside school,
6. flattering and joking, and
7. sharing problems and feelings.

Figure 12 illustrates the first six of these purposes with examples from the corpus. Each letter deals with one or more of the purposes. Some relate directly to the visit; others rely on it implicitly. Some of the purposes served by the letters are more complicated than others, but, in general, each purpose requires the writer to venture beyond the "simple declaratives about him/herself" and "one question to the recipient" that typified the earliest letters.

Exchange of Gifts:

Dear Jeremy,
I like to watch Bugs Bunny. What do you like to watch? I like other shows besides Bugs Bunny. Can you please send me another scratch a' sniff?
Your penpal,
Mark

Comments on the Visit:

Dear Jane,
I did give you my address. I'll give you my phone number to. next time you can come to are school. we have a teacher his name is Mr. D. I bet you met him whats your teachers name.

My Address
1331
Blueberry hill
Phone number
446-0986
Love,
Ilze

Describing School Life:

Dear Liz,
My phone number is, 453-1068 and my address is, Wagon Wheel court 6101 MI. Our soical studies class is going to have a Japan play. Mrs. Roberts said that I am going to be the lead because I going to have a real comand. And in science today I'm going to have a plant and a cricket.

Love,
Jane

Describing Life Outside School:

Dear Chad,
I have a dential aopintment tommorw. I'm going to ask if I can go to the beach next weekend. I hope I see you again.
your friend, David

Dear Rachel,
I went to my friend's house for the weekend. My friend has a lot of marbles. boulders, Jumbos. He gave me sixty-three. Then we started to share. How many marbles do you have?
From,
Anish

Dear Lee Ann
I think your the best penpal in the world to. I had a good Easter did you? I hope you had a good time with your brother and sister-in-law. I am going to move to Idaho. And I will be with my mom the whole summer.
your pen pal
Shelly

Exchanging Home Addresses and Phone Numbers:

Dear Lynn,
I will give you my address and we can write letters back and forth,even if we are at home we can write. 2409 Round Hill Road, E.E. 48823 Will you give me your address?
Love, Jean Wilson

Jokes and Flattery:

Dear Machelle,
You are werd because you tell funny jokes. But I do like you. I will tell you my phone number. It is 452-7896. I like you a lot.
from, Sarah

Dear Lynn,
I want roller skating yesterday. Dont write back anymore know just kiding. as you know
Love Lynn Smith

Figure 12. The letters to pen pals serve multiple purposes.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

To achieve some of these purposes requires only one letter. Others require one letter and a reply. Still others are worked out in several rounds of letters where the children appear to chain topics. In some of the letters children share information about themselves that would ordinarily not be shared in face-to-face communication. In many we can see the effort to establish shared experience and understandings.

Researchers have begun to document the ways in which a written dialogue with another can occasion the acquisition and practice of functions of written discourse such as persuasion, complaint, joking, and flattery. These forms are important to social life but may be neglected in the acquisition of more formal types of school writing. Letters are a way to expand and extend the written expressive repertoire because, as transactions, they call forth in their authors a variety of social functions of writing (Florio & Frank, in press; Staton, Note 8; Shuy, Note 9; Greene, Note 12). This has been the case for the pen pals.

The flexing of literary muscles in the pen pal letters followed a somewhat stiff beginning that was warmed by the visit to Conley School. Eventually, for some of the students, the correspondence ventured into the area of problems and feelings. Perhaps not surprisingly it is in this domain that the only extension of topics over more than two letters was observed. It is also in these letters that pen pals worked to find things in common. In the first example in Figure 13 the boys exchanged comments on something that was a great problem for Reggie--fighting on the playground and the punishment of having to stand against the wall. Related to that issue was

Dear Jim

Do you care if I call Jim Jimmy? All we have is mud! I hate school! It's boring. Once I had to stand against the wall.

HAVE A HAPPY EASTER
REGGIE

Deat Regge, I like school because I do not haf to stand against the wall. On Friday I played basketball And I got to come out to your school with my mom. When my mom saw me playing basketball she was paroud of me.

your pen pal
Jimmy

Dear Jimmy,

I'm in Cub Scouts, aind I nouw your mom we got a new boy in our class, I got to stand against the wall for a week.

I'm giving you 3 baseball cards & 3 football cards & 3 hockey cards Look in the back---------->

Your penpal
Reggie

Dear Kathy,

I don't want to move at all, but I have to. I will miss you.

"I WILL MISS YOU"!

Danielle

Dear Danielle

It is too bad that you are moving to New Jersey but I hope you will like It a lot and I will miss you a lot and I hope you will miss me a lot to but I know it will be fun in New Jersey and I bet I would have fun to. I love you a lot.

so long

Love,
Kathy S.

Figure 13. Sharing problems and feelings in the letters.

the subject of basketball--a popular game in both playgrounds. Neatly, Jim raised both that topic and the fact of his mother's pride in his playing. Jim's mother was one of the other teachers in Reggie's classroom. Thus, when Reggie replied, the pen pals had now commiserated about Reggie's problem, raised the common interest of basketball, and acknowledged that Reggie knew Jim's mother and saw her every day.

In the second example, Danielle wrote about her feelings related to moving. Briefly and emphatically she stated the situation and her feelings about both the move and her pen pal. She used capital letters and an exaggerated exclamation point for emphasis. Kathy replied directly. She linked all of her assertions in one long sentence that gives the sense of a rush of feelings. In her letter she not only asserted her affection for her friend and assured her that New Jersey would be a nice place to live, but she took her friend's role, saying that she, too, would like New Jersey. Like her pen pal, she modified her exclamation point--this time with two hearts.

Across the unique pen pal relationships we can see the gradual coming to know another in large part by means of writing. In the Pen Pal project students gradually built upon their encounters with their audience. At first the pen pal visit was the primary, literal encounter on which they built. But, in time, previous letters became encounters as well. They were resources upon which the students could draw in framing their next letters.

Looking back in June, Ms. Donovan elaborated on this idea when she reported that as students came to know their pen pals, they not

only wrote more, but they wrote more easily as well. The letters became an integral part of a real and growing association.

> They really learned to write letters. I think that's in large part due to having pen pals. It's really made it clear to them why you do that kind of thing. And so now when they get their pen pal letters, they can just whip out a letter in about fifteen minutes instead of five days, and know what they want to say. So, more than anything, having concrete experiences to go along with their writing that inspire it and give them an outlet for it makes a big difference. Without that back there, there's no reason to do it. (Interview, 6/4/80)

The Life Book

An unfamiliar school, twice as big as any they had gone to before, new teachers and a schedule that changes from one day to the next, all contribute to the excitement and nervousness of the sixth graders' first days in middle school. At the beginning of the school year the teachers work at acclimating the students to the new surroundings, helping them to become acquainted with new classmates and teaching them the expectations and norms of behavior for the middle school. The first assignments are short and each has a function of placement or socialization. It is a period of preparation--of adjustment--rather than academic instruction.

Writing had been a part of the activities from the beginning of the school year. Because Mrs. Anderson believed that writing is important she planned activities in which it was necessary for children to write in order for them to participate. An example of this is the get-acquainted games of the first days of school, in which children wrote about their own characteristics and exchanged information with the others in the team. As the period of orientation drew to a close, the real business of schooling got underway. And for our teacher, Mrs. Anderson, that was the signal to begin the first major writing assignment of sixth grade--The Life Book.

Planning

An important aspect of Mrs. Anderson's year-long plan for writing was sequencing tasks so that each activity teaches or reviews a skill needed for the next. For the Life Book, the skill

she was concerned with was writing complete sentences. The planning for the Life Book began with activities for sentence writing.

During an interview early in the school year, Mrs. Anderson talked about how she planned writing activities in sequence:

> Today she will have the students work on a "sentence hunt." The idea is to help students understand "what a sentence is." Tuesday they will begin work on the Life Book. She wants them to use complete sentences when writing in the Life Book and will remind them later in the week about the lesson they are doing today. "Remember when we talked about sentences?" (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

For the sentence writing activity, the teacher first talked about the concept of a sentence. Then, she encouraged students to give examples of sentences, writing them on an overhead projector slide. She explained how to add variety and length to kernel sentences. The homework assignment was to expand three kernel sentences into complex ones.

In planning for writing activities, Mrs. Anderson thought about what skills the children would need to be successful at doing the assignment. She spoke about it being "unfair" to expect children to do something they hadn't been prepared for.

In a journal entry, Mrs. Anderson wrote about the Life Books:

> This afternoon kids had class time to work on the week's longer writing project. I chose to have the kids make "This is My Life" booklets because I think it will not threaten the students who are low in spelling and writing skills, and it will be a meaningful activity for those with more ability. Also, the kids usually have fun making them and after all the testing and listening to me they've had to put up with, I decided they needed a break. (Journal, 9/18/79)

Mrs. Anderson's concern with the differing ability levels of her students is apparent in her planning. She did not plan alternate

writing for those with less developed writing skills, but presented the task in a way that, while helping those who needed it, wouldn't get in the way of those who didn't.

Throughout the year, Mrs. Anderson tried to plan activities that would be enjoyable for her students. She judged the success of an assignment by how much the kids liked it. Thus, she planned the first of the weekly writing tasks to be one that the children would enjoy.

Implementation

Mrs. Anderson described the Life Book activity in the following way:

> The activity involves each student finding pictures which represent events in his life--and possibly his dreams for the future. The pictures are glued on paper and captions (I stressed using complete sentences again--actually that is the "why" for yesterday's homework assignment) are written. Then the pages are enclosed in a construction paper cover. The completed books will be put out on a table for all to read and--let's hope--enjoy! (Journal, 9/19/79)

The teacher introduced the plan to the students by showing them a copy of a Life Book that she herself had made.

> She passed out magazines, specified that the assignment must be neat, well organized, and written in complete sentences that make sense. She asked them to look in the magazines for pictures that show something about their lives. She showed students a booklet she had done about her life. There are about two or three pictures per page and next to each of the pictures is written at least one sentence. Mrs. Anderson read these sentences to the class, which tell about, e.g., her graduation from college, marriage, church, sons, hobbies, travel, vacations, teacher in grade six. She showed students another one that Mrs. Lambert had done. (Field Notes, 9/14/79)

This modeling of an assignment goes far beyond simply showing the students how the teacher wants it done. Mrs. Anderson used this opportunity to tell the students about herself--to share her life with them. She wanted to create an environment of trust and acceptance in which children feel comfortable and willing to share their writing. This example of sharing and community building was as important as the model of a finished product that the the actual Life Book itself provided.

A third reason for modeling an assignment is explained in the interview notes:

> Mrs. Anderson began talking about the Life Book when she finished the journal. She had made her own about three years ago and uses that as an example. She likes to always do the assignment herself first, partly to use it as an example, but also to see if there are any problems in the actual doing of the task that she didn't foresee. (Interview Notes, 9/17/79)

Working on the Life Books was a time for students to get to know each other better. Mrs. Anderson allowed talking as long as the students were working.

> An activity like the one above (she had been explaining the Life Book) gets really noisy, but that doesn't bother me at all as long as the kids are working. When they start messing around I begin to get angry. (Journal, 9/18/79)

This opportunity for talking with each other and with the teacher helped the team organization become a social unit. Students identify strongly with their team number, which for these students was "61." There was a competition among the teams as to which was the "best."

Excerpts from the field notes describe the class activity when students were working on the Life Books:

Mrs. Andersen says that next week she will have paper for covers and materials for pasting.
Student: "What about scissors?"
Mrs. Anderson: "There are scissors on the windowsill."
Mrs. Anderson continues to pass out magazines... "I'm trying to give a little variety."

Mrs. Anderson explains that students can get started on a communications arts assignment [the Life Book] due next week Thursday and that they would have some class time to work on it. She shows the class her own sample and that of Mrs. Lambert and explains what they are to do. She tells students that when she looked for a particular picture she couldn't find what she wanted; so instead she found pictures which might be appropriate, then selected from them. She reads from her booklet, and asks that students' assignments be "neat, well spaced, and use complete sentences." (Field Notes, 9/14/79)

Mrs. Anderson: "Who needs a picture of a pretty blonde sister and her mother?:...gives it to Marie (who is blonde)...Mrs. Anderson helps different students.
Mrs. Anderson: "Who has a grey haired mother or grandmother?"...

Mrs. Anderson continues to help students find pictures that they can use in their project.
Mrs. Anderson: "...show things that you want to do or like to do?..."
Christa shows a picture of tall buildings near water: "It's New York, but I'm going to put 'Baltimore.'"
Mrs. Anderson: "Anybody want this?" (flashes picture at students)

Gary asks me to draw a pond. (We look at some pictures which I thought might help him; make a couple of very rough sketches to give him ideas of how to proceed)...

Mrs. Anderson: "Will everyone get into a seat?"
Student: "Is time up already?"
Mrs. Anderson asks students to start cleaning up because in five minutes it will be time to switch classes.

Carl has collected several pictures. He asks me about paper. I guessed that Mrs. Anderson might soon be giving students some.

Mrs. Anderson asks students for return of scissors, pens, and glue.
Mrs. Anderson: "Will those of you who are ready to go please be quiet?"

> Mrs. Anderson explains that some people got into shenanigans...corrects Micki..."would it help you to have until Friday?" (for completing the Life Book); says students will work on it Thursday; gives ideas for where else to look for pictures.
>
> Mrs. Anderson: "...if people can't get along together...will need a seating chart..." Mrs. Anderson expresses displeasure when students say "but he did it to me." Mrs. Anderson says that she will usually get to that person, too. Mrs. Anderson says that she has seen some baby-like behavior, tripping, poking, etc...that her patience is wearing thin...time to switch...that she is giving students time to get used to their new school environment but that students will be held accountable for their behavior.
>
> Mrs. Anderson dismisses Class B.
>
> Mrs. Anderson leaves for library to get more magazines, said her present collection was wearing thin. Class A enters.
>
> Mrs. Anderson: "We've a couple of things to do today. We don't have much time."
>
> Mrs. Anderson explains [to Class A] what is needed for life booklet and writes the names of items to be included on an overhead projector slide: cover, pictures, captions.
>
> Mrs. Anderson explains that pictures can be drawn if students wish, also that photos may be used; that captions should be in sentence form.
>
> Mrs. Anderson: "Do your best in the amount of time you have...at least four pages not counting the cover...students should plan that they will be put out and shared with others...suggests a rough draft of captions on separate paper; that students condense what they want to say; plan a margin...can use lined paper if they wish...scissors, paper and glue are available...break at 2:00. (Field Notes, 9/18/79)

When Mrs. Anderson introduced this activity, she first explained the assignment to each class. But everyone did not begin at the same time. The uneven beginning of this occasion for writing is an example of how Mrs. Anderson adjusted task demands for the different student ability levels represented in the class.

Mrs. Anderson explained the Life Book assignment on a Friday, telling the students it was due the following Thursday. By the next Thursday she had decided that they needed more time and changed the due day to Friday. Because of unexpected interruptions and because this early in the year she did not know exactly how well the students would work when in a group setting, she was willing to change the due date to assure that all students would finish.

Mrs. Anderson worked with the students, which helped them to become better acquainted with her. Also, by being a member of the group, she kept control of the activity. She was able to chide one student, praise another, ask questions, and find materials in the space of a few minutes. She knew how they were progressing and reminded them, when necessary, about using complete sentences (Field Notes, 9/18/79).

The duration of the activity was one week--from Friday, September 14, to Friday, September 21. The writing seemed to take place entirely at school. Students may have brought magazines from home, but Mrs. Anderson took the responsibility of supplying a selection of them for students to search for appropriate photographs.

Evaluation

The Life Book assignment was the first occasion of the school year that Mrs. Anderson formally evaluated.

> The Life Books were turned in on Friday--after spending most of Thursday's class time on them. Generally, they were neatly done and I really enjoyed reading them. I wrote a personal note to each student and stapled it to the last page. If the student had made one type of error frequently, I mentioned it in the note. I hope this

> type of feedback to the student is more meaningful than a grade (ABC) or a mark (✓+,✓,✓-). I'm anxious to see if any of the kids have any comments when they are returned to them tomorrow. (Journal, 9/23/79)

The evaluation was based on the information given to students when the assignment was introduced. Mrs. Anderson had asked them to write in complete sentences, have the pictures well spaced, and to be neat (Field Notes, 9/14/79, p. 9). She talked about the Life Books the following week.

> In thinking back over last week's assignment, Mrs. Anderson said she was very happy with the Life Books. The students did "a good job." Mrs. Anderson wrote her evaluation on a separate sheet of paper and clipped it in their book. She looked for complete sentences, good penmanship, and to see if they did the assignment right--that is, did they get the purpose. Students were very enthusiastic about the books and spent a lot of time looking at each others'. (Interview Notes, 9/25/79)

In the Life Book, as well as in assignments later in the year, Mrs. Anderson allowed for individual differences, not in the requirements of the assignment, but in the evaluation. In an interview on September 17, she said she would accept phrases rather than sentences from the "slower kids." Evaluation was not based on one standard for the whole class, but rather on a comparison between what the teacher thought each student was capable of doing and what he or she actually did. Mrs. Anderson's often-repeated reminder to the students was, "remember to do your best."

Audience

From the beginning of her plan for this occasion for writing, Mrs. Anderson wanted the students to share their Life Books with each other. After she had shown them her own Life Book and that of

another teacher, she kept these examples available so that students could read them. In her September 18 journal entry she wrote that the completed books would be put on a table for all to read and enjoy.

The teacher was an audience, also, because the students knew that their work would be evaluated. When evaluation occurs, the evaluator is always an important audience. Eleven- and twelve-year-olds have been in school long enough to be very conscious of pleasing the teacher. By working closely with the students, Mrs. Anderson helped them to know what her expectations were so that she, as an audience, was not an unknown.

Function

When Mrs. Anderson first spoke of the Life Book in an interview, she said that it was the first big writing assignment of the year and that it would help the students to get acquainted with others in the class (Interview Notes, 9/17/79). So one of the major intended functions of the Life Book was building the social system of the classroom. The Life Book assignment fulfilled this function through the structure and dynamics of the associated classroom activity. Students were allowed and encouraged to visit with each other in a friendly casual setting, with Mrs. Anderson modeling that behavior.

A second function of the Life Book was to begin to establish a pattern of weekly writing assignments. Mrs. Anderson planned to initiate a major writing activity each week throughout the year. She wanted the students to have regular opportunities to write and tried to find or develop activities that they would enjoy. These assignments were given in a sequence so that each assignment would help

the students attain skills they would need for the next. The sentence writing helped prepare the students for the Life Book. The Life Book helped students to understand the pattern or routine for the weekly writings to follow.

Mrs. Anderson suggested to the students that they first write the captions for the pictures on a sheet of paper and then copy the caption into the book. This was not a requirement and she did not check to see who did or did not do this. Later in the year, she required rough drafts and students had to turn them in.

The date on which the project was due was important. She changed the date to allow more time so that all the students could finish the work. Handing assignments in on time was stressed for this project and throughout the year.

The Life Books served as a transition activity between the early non-graded assignments and the more academically-oriented activities that were to follow.

The Magazine of Your Choice:

A Sixth-Grade Writing Project

> Yesterday afternoon I talked with the classes about the magazines I am going to ask them to "publish." This week's writing assignment is to begin the rough drafts of a story which they will eventually incorporate into their individual magazines. For this reason, they had to decide what types of magazines they wanted to make--general interest, sport, beauty, comic, etc.--so they would write a story which would be appropriate to include in their particular magazine. (Journal, 11/7/79)

This quote is excerpted from the planning journal kept by Mrs. Anderson, the sixth-grade teacher in our study. In this entry, Mrs. Anderson alluded to the introduction of an occasion for writing called the Magazine Project. Although she had not used this project for two or three years, Mrs. Anderson had assigned the magazine project in previous years. She recalled that "students enjoyed making the magazine, it was kind of fun for them" (Interview, 11/30/79). Mrs. Anderson liked this project because students of all abilities were able to participate and the students were pleased with their products.

Mrs. Anderson's introduction of the Magazine Project focused on the short story that the students had two weeks to complete. But the Magazine Project encompassed much more than a short story. Each student's magazine was to include:

Table of Contents
Short Story
Interview
Feature Article

In addition, Mrs. Anderson encouraged students to add their own creative touches, including comics and ads or even recipes. The

magazines were to be completed before the winter vacation. This due date allowed the students approximately six weeks to complete their magazines.

Although the list of the contents of the magazine provided makes the magazine look like a simple project, this list is deceiving. A first impression of the project is that it appeared to be an exercise with the goal of encouraging expression and of producing magazines. A closer look revealed that the project was much more than a new way to use skills that students had already mastered. In fact, when the project was introduced, the students had only a few of the skills they needed to produce the magazine. Instead of the magazine acting as a goal, Mrs. Anderson used the magazine as a means. It was a vehicle that provided the motivation or the reason for students to learn how to write an interview, to punctuate, and organize a table of contents, which are just a few of the required skills needed to complete the magazine. The real goals were to learn new writing skills and to integrate these to produce a product that was meaningful to each student--a personal magazine.

Mrs. Anderson's extensive plans for the magazine project included lessons and sublessons directly and indirectly related to the magazine. The major lessons on how to write an interview, a short story, and a feature article were directly related to the magazine project. Other sublessons on punctuation, quotations, and other skills, although necessary for proper completion of the magazine, were not directly related to the components of the magazine. In one sense the very first skill lesson at the beginning of the year on capitalization

was related to the magazine project. Mrs. Anderson planned the shorter sublessons on skills so that they were related to the magazine project. For instance, the lesson on quotation marks emphasized the need for this skill to aid students in writing their interviews for the magazine. While teaching new skills needed for the magazine, Mrs. Anderson would recall, with the class, skills they had learned earlier in the year (Videotape 550, 11/6/79). The students were also prepared for the magazine project through an earlier project called the Life Book. Although the Life Book Project required fewer skills and less time than the magazine, it was also an individual project which foreshadowed many of the rules and requirements seen in the magazine.

Mrs. Anderson planned lessons on different types of writing for the magazine. Students in her class had not been formally instructed in the forms of writing, such as short stories, interviews, or feature articles, which were required for the magazine. Since these forms of writing were a part of the magazine, students had a reason to learn these new types of writing, i.e., a reason other than "the teacher said we had to learn it."

Mrs. Anderson's enthusiasm for organizing the Magazine Project grew out of previous experience with the project and from her impression that the students liked it very much and that it was a project that could be shared with other members of the class. The magazine was attractive to the teacher because many shorter lessons could be integrated into the instruction for the required article included in the magazine. In this sense, the magazine project was

a stepping stone for later larger projects just as previous lessons such as the Life Book were preparation for the magazine.

The Process of Instruction

We have described some pieces of the magazine, but how did it all fit together to become a completed project? As stated earlier, the writing project was introduced to students in early November. The project was completed the week before Christmas break. Mrs. Anderson introduced the magazine to the students in the manner that she used to introduce most writing assignments: whole class instruction with the teacher at the front of the room using an overhead projector to display examples and important points. The format for explaining the magazine began with Mrs. Anderson giving an overview of the entire project. She showed the students examples of a completed magazine she had created and ones created by students from earlier years. The entire class brainstormed topics for the magazine while the teacher listed the numerous themes on the overhead projector slide. After a number of topics were listed, Mrs. Anderson encouraged the students to ask questions. She then clarified due dates and other requirements of the project (Videotape I, 513, 11/6/79).

Skill Lessons

Once questions were answered and Mrs. Anderson felt satisfied that the students understood the long range plans for the magazine, she began to introduce a skill lesson on quotation marks. This skill lesson taught students a skill necessary for the completion of the magazine assignment. Specifically, proper use of quotation

marks would be needed in writing dialogue in interviews for the magazines (Videotape II, 599, 11/6/79).

The method Mrs. Anderson used for teaching the skill lesson was similar to that used in the introduction of the magazine: teacher-centered instruction with Mrs. Anderson at the front of the room using the overhead projector to explain the lesson. During the skill lesson, Mrs. Anderson first talked about the skill and then she and the students completed examples shown on the overhead projector. Mrs. Anderson also walked around the room checking students as they used the new skill to write sentences (Videotape I, 635, 11/6/79) and she referred the students to a page in a reference book for further help with the new skill (Interview, 12/4/79).

The day after the skill lesson on the use of quotation marks in a sentence, Mrs. Anderson introduced the use of quotations in conversations. When the lesson was completed, the students were asked to apply the skill they had just learned. They were given five minutes to write a conversation using quotations. After five minutes the class divided into groups of two or three students in which they read each others' papers. As students finished correcting their papers, the teacher collected the assignment. In her comments on this exercise, Mrs. Anderson wrote,

> I purposely gave them a time limit as I find that some kids actually do perform better if they know the working time will be very short. (Journal, 11/7/79)

Required Theme Writing for the Magazine

The writing assignments, which eventually became parts of the magazine (feature article, interview, and short story), were intro-

duced in much the same manner as the punctuation lessons. Mrs. Anderson usually presented the writing assignment from the front of the classroom using the overhead projector to illustrate and list components of the assignment (Videotape I, 11/6/79). Modeling is a teaching method used by Mrs. Anderson in skill lessons and in the writing assignments intended for inclusion in the magazine (Videotape II, 11/7/79). In all of her lessons, Mrs. Anderson showed students examples and often modeled the processes being discussed. For instance, she used the overhead projector to correct sentences and list parts of an outline (Videotapes I & II, 11/6/79).

The assignments for the magazine project, which consisted of three major themes in final form, may seem like a lot of writing, but students in Mrs. Anderson's class usually do a lot of writing. In addition to shorter assignments, students ordinarily write a theme each week. This theme is written in rough draft form and is corrected by Mrs. Anderson and returned. The students then made corrections and recopied their themes in final form. Students were given some class time to write their weekly themes. In addition to class time, most of the students spent some time out of school completing their themes (Journal, 11/6/79).

In planning the magazine project, Mrs. Anderson capitalized on this routine of weekly theme writing by replacing the weekly theme with the assigned writing for the magazine. Similar to the weekly themes, students wrote a rough draft of the assignment they were working on.

Once the magazine assignments were begun, Mrs. Anderson decided to arrange her teaching to allow students more class time for writing. She discussed the new scheduling with her students. In her journal and in an interview, Mrs. Anderson reflected on her reasons for allowing more class time for writing. She decided to extend writing periods to an hour in length because she found that she could not help all students in the 45 minutes she had previously allotted for writing (Interview, 12/4/79). Mrs. Anderson thought that if students had sufficient time for writing in class, especially the final copy, that they might write the rough draft on Monday and then come to the writing session with questions and she could help them more with the processes of proofreading and editing. She did not want them to simply give her their papers to proofread for them; she wanted students to become aware of what improvements could be made in their writing as she worked with them. She hoped that working with students as they were writing would teach them skills in a more natural way--as the problems came up (Interview, 12/4/79).

Mrs. Anderson also wrote in her journal about her reasons for allowing students more time to write in class.

> It is my goal that all students will become more aware of ways in which to improve their original writing. (Journal, 11/29/79)

By allowing students to write in class, Mrs. Anderson hoped that the students would take a more active role in and responsibility for their own editing. Mrs. Anderson preferred this arrangement to the current one in which students handed in their papers and she

edited them and then returned the papers to the students for corrections.

> Mrs. Anderson does not want her students to simply give her the papers to proofread for them. She would like the students to become more aware of the process and what improvements could be made. As she works with students she hopes to teach them skills in a more natural way--as the problems come up. (Interview, 12/4/79)

Fate and Closure

As the due date for the magazine project approached, Mrs. Anderson reviewed the contents of the magazine and more class time was devoted to completion of the project (Journal, 12/12/79). Mrs. Anderson was pleased with the eagerness students showed in trying to complete their magazines on time (Journal, 12/14/79). Because the magazine was the most complex writing project of the year to date, Mrs. Anderson was careful to remind students of all the parts they should include and she discussed her wish that the students' magazines be "representative of their best efforts at this time" (Journal, 12/18/79).

When the students finished their magazines, they shared them with other students. Mrs. Anderson discussed, with the class, the four categories she intended to use in evaluating the magazines. The four categories were:

1. The student compiled an excellent magazine of original writings.
2. The student compiled a satisfactory magazine of original writings.
3. The student compiled a magazine of original writings which were below standard.
4. The student did not complete a magazine of original writings. (Journal, 12/21/79)

Mrs. Anderson further discussed with the class the criteria that she would use to assign each magazine to one of these categories. The students were asked to evaluate their own work using the four categories listed above. Mrs. Anderson intended to compare her evaluation with each of the students' evaluations.

Mrs. Anderson read and evaluated the magazines over the winter holiday and returned them to the students when school began in January. At the beginning of winter term, table space was provided for students to leave their magazines to share with others. The students showed "a lot of interest in looking at the magazines which were on display." Interestingly, Mrs. Anderson observed, "several good students who did poor work (for them) took their magazines home rather than leave them out for others to look at" (Journal, 1/9/80).

Mrs. Anderson expressed pleasant surprise at the agreement between the teacher and student evaluations: "it was amazing how often we agreed with each other!" (Journal, 1/9/80). The student evaluation also served to lessen the teacher's own dislike of evaluating student work and helped to avoid negative student reactions: "if they had not gone through the evaluation process themselves I think many of them would have been mad at me for what they would have considered a low grade" (Journal, 1/9/80).

An interesting result of the teacher's evaluation of the students' magazines was an assessment of how the class was developing over the year. Mrs. Anderson appeared to use this project as a gauge to stop and check the year's progress. After completing the evalua-

tion she reported, "It (the evaluation process) took a great deal of time, but it was also rewarding in that I became more aware of the growth many students had made since September when they made the Life Books" (Journal, 1/9/80).

Students and the Magazine Project

Since students could choose their own topic for the magazine, the project was an opportunity for them to express interests or hobbies they had outside of school. The teacher's encouragement to be creative with the magazines also allowed students freedom to include as many articles, comics, or advertisements as they wished. School projects often do not allow students the latitude of creative expression provided in the magazine project. Mrs. Anderson noted that students who chose a topic they had a personal interest in enjoyed the magazine project more than those who chose a general topic magazine (Journal, 12/11/79).

The magazine project had several potential audiences. The primary audience for the magazine was the theoretical "subscribers" to the magazine. For instance, a sports car magazine would be written for an audience of sports car enthusiasts. Due to the constraints of the classroom, the teacher, not the project audience for the magazine, was the one who evaluated the writing, therefore the teacher was an important audience for the students' consideration. Since students knew their projects could be shared with other students in the classroom, the other students in the class were also a potential audience. Finally, the author of each individual magazine was also a potential audience, especially since the teacher required the students to evaluate their own magazines.

As discussed earlier, Mrs. Anderson believed that giving the students a chance to evaluate their own projects gave them a better sense of how they did on the project and prevented the "hard feelings" that often accompany an evaluation. In fact, student reaction to the magazine project was generally positive. Most students completed their magazines by the due date and one student "was so excited that he started another one which he said he would finish during the vacation" (Journal, 12/21/79).

Transforming Teacher Thoughts and Beliefs into Action

In this part of our description of the magazine project, we focus on the teacher's beliefs and how they are evidenced in her plans and teaching. Examination of videotapes, journals, and interviews revealed seven beliefs or principles of practice that Mrs. Anderson discussed and translated into action in the magazine project:

1. Writing is an important area of instruction.
2. Writing instruction must be well-planned.
3. Modeling is an effective means of communicating writing instruction.
4. Students need to feel successful in writing.
5. Students must be prepared for what is to come; they need skills before plunging into an activity.
6. Writing activities must be interesting and challenging.
7. Evaluation is an important aspect of writing instruction.

Mrs. Anderson is convinced that writing is an important area of instruction. She finds that "writing helps kids to focus their thinking; they often have ideas that are not well thought out" (Interview, 12/11/79). But this does not mean that writing must be difficult and discouraging. When discussing writing at the be-

ginning of the school year, Mrs. Anderson said, "kids get discouraged if they are not successful right away" (Journal, 9/7/79). For this reason Mrs. Anderson's plans for writing activities at the beginning of the school year focus on assignments that the students will enjoy and ones that they can feel successful doing (Journal, 9/7/79). For example, at the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Anderson found her students' writing abilities were below her expectations. Based on this information, Mrs. Anderson changed her writing instruction plans to include easier assignments which were short and would allow students to feel successful (Journal, 9/7/79).

Mrs. Anderson believes effective writing instruction must be well planned (Interview, 10/9/79). Part of her planning included the teacher actually doing the writing activity before she assigns it to the class (Journal, 9/6/79). In the instance of the Magazine Project, Mrs. Anderson herself completed all the magazine requirements and assembled her own magazine. This activity helped the teacher to understand what she had assigned and also was used by the teacher as a model for the students.

Mrs. Anderson has found modeling to be an effective means of communicating writing instruction (Interview, 10/16/79). While introducing the Magazine Project, Mrs. Anderson showed the students magazines completed by sixth graders in previous years. She also showed the students the magazine she had completed and used other ways of modeling throughout the magazine project (Videotape I, 11/6/79). In addition, students were encouraged and given time to examine other published magazines to use as models (Journal, 1/9/80).

Another aspect of the importance of modeling was explained in an interview in which Mrs. Anderson described how some students need to know what the teacher wants and have difficulty if they do not have a model (Interview, 6/15/80). "Surprisingly, most students do not copy the teacher's model," but Mrs. Anderson found that a model helps to communicate the teacher's expectations and it "helps students to feel more secure when they can see the right idea" (Journal, 9/6/79).

The practice of modeling to help students feel secure is consistent with Mrs. Anderson's concern that students need to feel successful in writing, especially during the first part of the year (Journal, 9/6/79; Interview on videotape, 2/11/80). One way that Mrs. Anderson translated this belief into practice is by planning assignments that students are technically prepared to do. "Students must be prepared for what is to come, they need skills before plunging into an activity" (Journal, 10/31/70). Mrs. Anderson accomplished this goal of preparing students by developing a curriculum with assignments that built on each other. As the year progressed, writing became more complex (Interview, 10/16/79). For instance, the Magazine Project was foreshadowed by the Life Book project, an assignment in which students were required to assemble pictures illustrating their lives and to write a story about their lives. This assignment helped prepare them for the similar (but more elaborate) format and requirements of the Magazine Project.

The Magazine Project, as described earlier, consisted of several writing assignments (interview, short story, feature article) and skill lessons that enabled students to write the assignments. The

interview is a good example of Mrs. Anderson's method of building complexity. The interview assignment was part of the magazine, and skill lessons on using quotations were part of the interview. In other words, the skill lesson (i.e., quotation marks) enabled the students to complete the writing assignment (i.e., the interview), which, in turn, enabled the students to complete their magazines. This gradual building of complexity was carefully monitored by Mrs. Anderson. The goal in this methods of teaching writing was to prepare students for what was to come. By monitoring student progress at each stage, Mrs. Anderson was more confident that students would have the knowledge necessary to complete their assignments and to be successful.

According to Mrs. Anderson, "writing should be interesting and challenging" (Interview on videotape, 2/11/80). Although Mrs. Anderson was committed to building students' confidence through successful writing experiences, she also realized students must be challenged by an assignment. How can these seemingly opposite values be reconciled in practice? One method is to allow students many choices. For instance, Mrs. Anderson allowed students to make any type of magazine they wanted. There were certain required assignments such as the short story, but even here students were allowed wide latitude in topics. Another method Mrs. Anderson used to make writing more interesting and challenging was to let students know the fate of their writing. "Kids take writing more seriously if they are going to share it" (Journal, 1/9/79). The fate of the Magazine Project was that the magazines would be shared and displayed at the individual student's discretion. Those students who wanted to could

leave their magazines on a classroom table set up to provide a place for students to look at the magazines their classmates had constructed (Journal, 1/9/80).

Evaluation is another topic frequently discussed by Mrs. Anderson, both with her students and in her journal entries and interviews. Evaluation is a sensitive area of discussion for Mrs. Anderson and she is careful in her approach. Because she feels students take pride in their work, Mrs. Anderson only marked on a student's rough draft paper. Usually her comments were appended to the final draft. In theory many teachers realize how traumatic evaluations can be and how discouraged a student may become if his or her work is severely criticized. The potential for poor communication and big disappointments in evaluation is especially high for writing activities, in which evaluation criteria are typically rather subjective. One part of the problem is that teachers must evaluate for several different purposes, including diagnostic purposes. The need for timely return of students' papers is another part of the evaluation problem. Mrs. Anderson firmly believes that all student writing should be read, and that it should be evaluated and returned to the students as soon as possible (Journal, 9/18/79).

The Magazine Project demanded much teacher time. Mrs. Anderson planned the project due date to enable her to take the magazines home over the winter vacation. In this way she had more time and was less pressured to complete her evaluations of the students' work in a few days.

Lots of writing for students usually means lots of work for the teacher, both in shepherding projects along and in final evaluation

and feedback. Students in Mrs. Anderson's class wrote a great deal; they wrote at least one theme per week plus other assignments. Many teachers would like to have their students write more but feel overwhelmed at the prospect of evaluating all those themes. Mrs. Anderson feels it is important to the students to know that someone has read their papers. One way that Mrs. Anderson was able to increase the amount of student writing that is reviewed was to recruit two parent volunteers to help with the task. Mrs. Anderson still reviewed the student papers and personally evaluated each student's writing on a rotating basis. This allowed students to write more yet it protected the teacher from becoming overwhelmed.

Summary

Reviewing the manner in which the Magazine Project was planned, evaluated, and taught, it is apparent that Mrs. Anderson combined lessons and integrated skills that she felt students needed to learn with activities that they found interesting and challenging. In turn, this occasion for writing served as preparation for future more complex lessons and projects. The Magazine Project was the first major writing occasion of the school year, and its served as the capstone experience of the fall term. The project was complex enough to be both challenging and satisfying to each student, and yet the individual components of the magazine were each of manageable size and thoroughly supported by skill lessons and in-class composition time, teacher feedback, and encouragement. The Magazine Project is a good example of how Mrs. Anderson maintained a delicate balance between teacher-provided structure for a complex set of writing

activities and an opportunity for students to develop feelings of ownership, choice, and control over their own creative work. Finally, the Magazine Project illustrates Mrs. Anderson's dual roles of curriculum builder as well as instructor of writing. The extra demands of creating, maintaining, and evaluating the Magazine Project were investments that paid off for Mrs. Anderson and her students in terms of added meaningfulness, coherence, and integration of skills and forms of written expression.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner:
Sixth Graders Plan a Dinner Party

Some teachers devise occasions for their students to express aspects of their lives through creative writing and speech. The following narrative describes how Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway created such an occasion by having the combined classes of their Lincoln Middle School sixth graders plan a dinner party, during a time designated as the team weekly class meeting. The Party Planning occasion continued for five consecutive Wednesdays, beginning in the middle of January and ending in February, a time of year when the students were reorienting themselves to each other and to the school environment after returning from the holiday vacation.

The dinner Party Planning occasion involved six steps: (1) individual students making party guest invitation lists of 10 real or imaginary people, (2) students meeting in groups of four to collectively decide on 10 people to invite, (3) the student groups drawing the seating arrangements for their invited guests, (4) the student groups planning a complete party menu, (5) the groups planning entertainment for their party guests, and (6) group presentations of their party plans to the class.

Genesis

Before reconstructing these stages from the field notes, it is helpful to know Mrs. Anderson's thoughts on the origin of the activity. Let's turn first to an entry in her journal:

> On Wednesday, Mr. Hathaway and I started the "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" project during the team meeting. It seems to me that I got the original

> basic idea from one of Simon's values clarification books--but it has been several years ago so now I've forgotten. When P.L. and I used the idea we added two ideas--the seating chart and the menu--then two years ago Mr. Hathaway and I added the planning of the entertainment idea. (Journal, 1/18/80)

Mrs. Anderson generally traces the origin of this activity to Sidney Simon's values clarification works. Importantly, she revised it over time through her team teaching experiences, making additions to round out the process of planning a complete dinner party.

With her reference to Simon we might infer that Mrs. Anderson favors those occasions that help students identify and share with others the concerns relevant to their daily lives. Some support for this inference comes from the following entry in her journal.

> I consider this primarily a social studies activity and my primary interests are in observing the interactions of students and helping those who have difficulty functioning in a group activity. (Journal, 1/18/80)

Specifically, Mrs. Anderson wants her students to develop their social interaction skills through this group participation activity. The content of this interaction we will see later does indeed stem from the students' personal values as they plan their dinner party.

Mrs. Anderson considered this activity to be part of the social studies curriculum. In an interview in which she sorted student writing assignments by purpose, she identified this occasion as "strictly social studies" (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). She grouped this assignment with other activities such as "writing social survey questions," and "writing reactions to a film on slavery."

With this teacher intent in mind, let us reconstruct the stages of this occasion in detail from the field notes.

Implementation

Day 1. We begin the party planning project with Mrs. Anderson's presentation of the assignment to the combined classes. Mrs. Anderson encouraged the students to think imaginatively about 10 people they thought were important to invite to their dinner party. She told them not to be concerned about money or other limitations. Mrs. Anderson encouraged them to think beyond their immediate environment and to develop guest lists that did not include family and friends.

> 2:12 Mrs. Anderson explains today's project. She tells students that they will have about ten minutes to do the first thing. They are to number their papers from 1 to 10. They are to use their imaginations in working on this assignment. She tells them that they are to list names of persons, living or dead, fictional or nonfictional, whom they would most like to invite to a dinner party. She adds that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity.
>
> 2:15 Mrs. Anderson tells them that there are limits. They may not write down anyone from their families or from the team. They are not to worry too much about the spelling of their guests' names. If all they know is the first names of their guests then that is all they have to write, such as Heidi from the book Heidi. She tells them that they have enough money to entertain lavishly. (Field Notes, 1/16/80, p. 4)

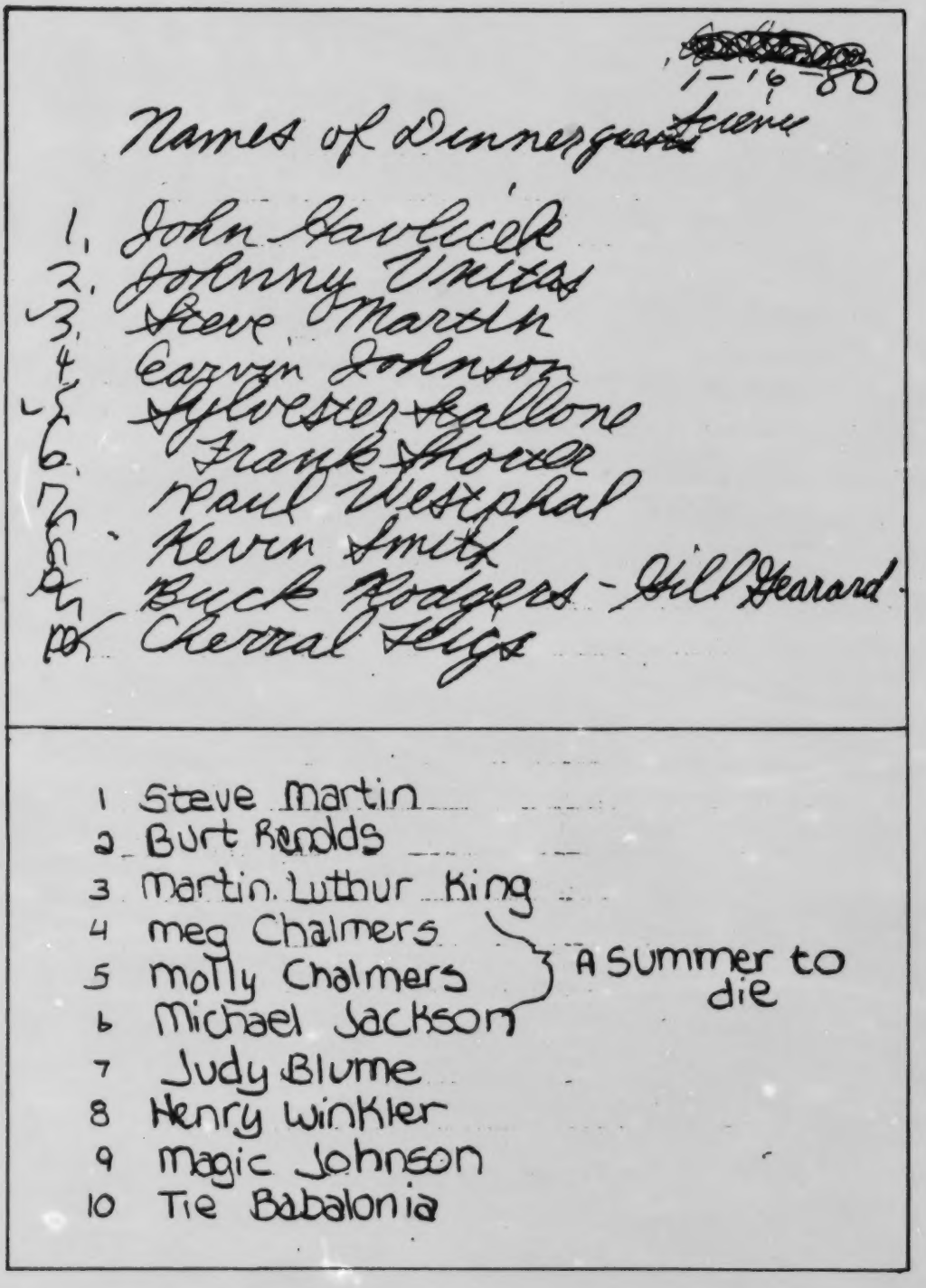
The first stage of this assignment is consistent with Mrs. Anderson's belief that writing assignments should be non-threatening experiences and ones that students enjoy (Interview Notes, 9/10/79). Mrs. Anderson has cleverly created such an opportunity in this occasion. Surely it must have been motivating and fun for the students to freely explore their imaginations in identifying their party guests. From the observer's viewpoint this occasion provides an opportunity to gain some insight into the students' culture.

Two examples of the individual students' party lists are shown in Figure 14. Generally they invited sport stars, movie celebrities, and book characters. Some students invited deceased relatives such as grandparents.

After about 15 minutes, Mr. Hathaway described the second part of the activity, which required the students to work in groups of four to compile their lists and collectively agree on 10 names. Mrs. Anderson assigned them to their groups from a list.

> 2:28 Mr. Hathaway announces the next thing the students will do. He tells them that they will be assigned to a group with three other students. They must tell the others in their group the ten names of their invited guests and offer one reason for having each person. Mr. Hathaway explains that each group of students will hear about 40 names. Their job is to agree on ten names for the group party lists. He explains the task again, then asks for questions. Mrs. Anderson reads the names of persons who will work together in each group. Students move to their respective groups throughout the room to begin working on their lists. (Field Notes, 1/16/80)

This part of the activity fits with Mrs. Anderson's belief that students need opportunities for developing social interaction skills and for sharing in small groups (Interview, 9/10/79). As the students shared their lists, the other students gained some insights into their classmates' interests and tastes. Regarding social interaction skills, the students possibly gained some experience in group dynamics. They faced justifying their guest lists, subjecting them to the evaluations and the influences of the other group members. Perhaps they learned some principles of negotiation and diplomacy. It seems that all the groups learned that they needed a secretary and a system for recording their collective decisions. The observer noted



1-19-80

Names of Dinnerguests Scene

1. John Havlicek
2. Johnny Unitas
3. Steve Martin
4. Earvin Johnson
5. Sylvester Gallone
6. Frank Shorter
7. Paul Westphal
8. Kevin Smith
9. Buck Rodgers - Bill Gerard
10. Cheryl Tiegs

1 Steve Martin
2 Burt Reynolds
3 Martin Luthur King
4 meg Chalmers
5 molly Chalmers
6 Michael Jackson
} A summer to die
7 Judy Blume
8 Henry Winkler
9 Magic Johnson
10 Tie Babalonia

Figure 14. Samples of individual students' invitation lists.

that each group designated a recorder and that this person was responsible for recording group choices, for transferring these to a separate sheet, and for turning in all sheets (including the originals) to the teachers at the end of the period. Finally, the students may have realized that writing can serve an instrumental function, as a mode of communication that need not have a strictly teacher-oriented, academic purpose. Examples of the group invitation lists the students generated are shown in Figure 15.

Day 2. On the following Wednesday afternoon, the teachers asked the students to return to their respective groups. While they finished up their group lists Mrs. Anderson introduced the third part of the assignment. She told the students to devise some type of seating arrangement for the people in their dinner party (10 guests, four students). Mr. Hathaway elaborated on the assignment:

> 2:14 Mr. Hathaway tells the students they must draw a table and a seating chart and that they must discuss their reasoning for the seating arrangements. For example, he explains, in politics one wouldn't seat the representative from Russia next to the representative from Afghanistan. (Field Notes, 1/23/80)

The student groups fashioned a variety of seating charts. The observer noted some star-shaped, rectangular, and M-shaped seating arrangements. Examples of their finished work are included in a later section of this report.

As on the first day, the two teachers created a group problem-solving situation for their students. The teachers did not prescribe problem solving methods for the student groups, but did specify the goals they had to achieve. The students had to develop the methods through their own group discussions.

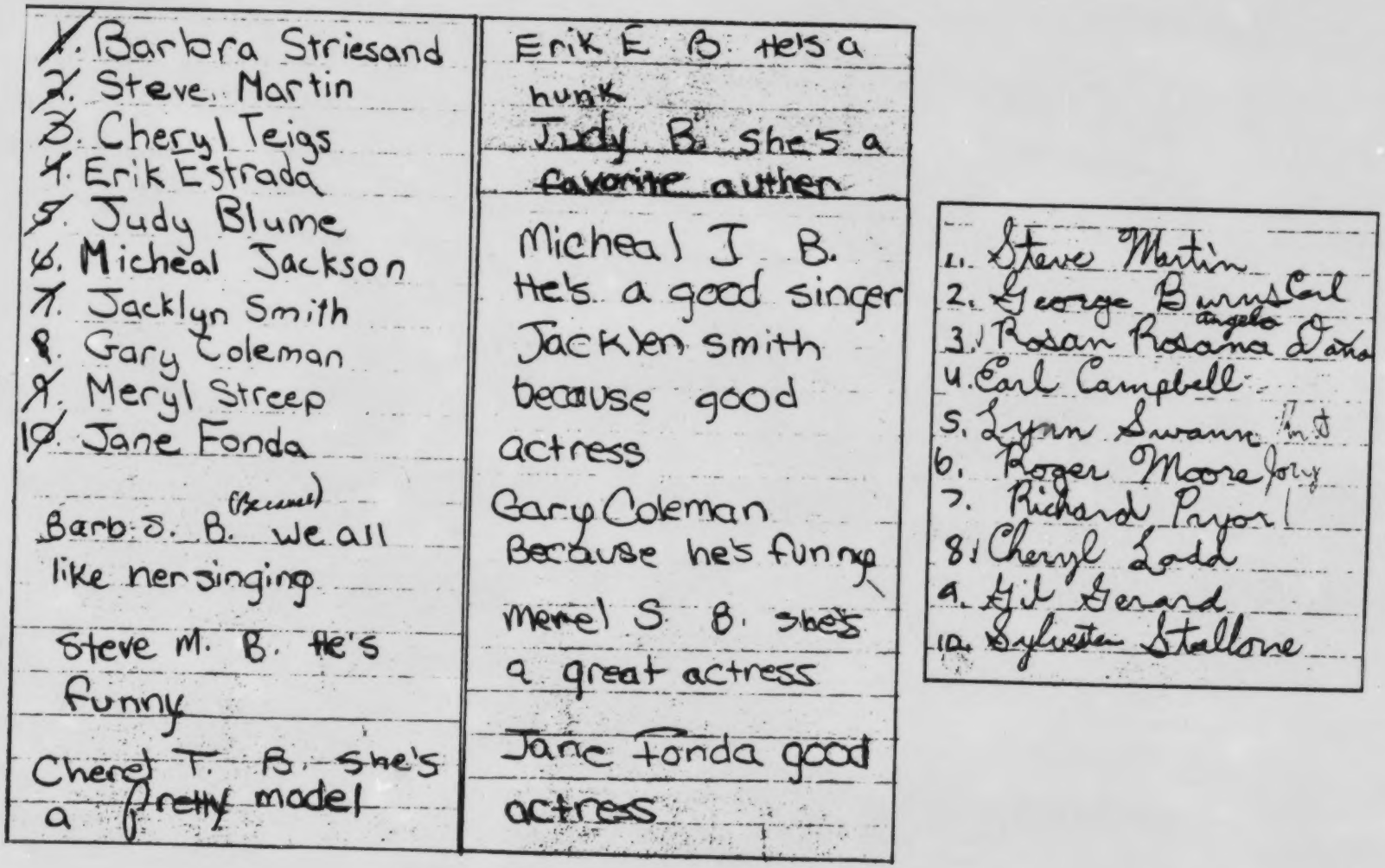

1. Barbra Striesand
2. Steve Martin
3. Cheryl Teigs
4. Erik Estrada
5. Judy Blume
6. Micheal Jackson
7. Jacklyn Smith
8. Gary Coleman
9. Meryl Streep
10. Jane Fonda
Barb S. B. (Streisand) we all like her singing
Steve M. B. he's funny
Cheryl T. B. she's a pretty model
Erik E B. he's a hunk
Judy B. she's a favorite auther
Micheal J B. he's a good singer
Jacklyn smith because good actress
Gary Coleman Because he's funny
Meryl S B. she's a great actress
Jane fonda good actress
1. Steve Martin
2. George Burns Carl
3. Rosan Rosana Dana Angela
4. Earl Campbell
5. Lynn Swann
6. Roger Moore
7. Richard Pryor
8. Cheryl Ladd
9. Gil Gerard
10. Sylvester Stallone

Figure 15. Samples of group invitation lists.

The students may have gained some experience from this activity in managing social relations. In designing the seating arrangements they had to cognitively rehearse the relationships among their guests, to encourage their interaction and to circumvent possible relational problems. Essentially the students had to imagine themselves as guests to help them decide the appropriate seating arrangements.

The stages of this occasion for writing described thus far have an underlying continuity and progression. This observation coincides with Mrs. Anderson's belief that student writing occasions should be sequential, such that one assignment prepares students for the next occasion (Interview, 10/9/79). Her commitment to sequential assignments across writing occasions is consistent with her practice of sequential assignments within these occasions. In the present activity the students have sequentially pieced together their party plans. It follows that the students will have to plan the menu and entertainment during the next two stages of this activity.

Day 3. During the third class meeting period the student groups planned a menu and the entertainment for their dinner party, after receiving instructions from the teachers. The following field note segment describes the opening minutes of this activity.

> 2:14 Mrs. Anderson and Mr. Hathaway pass out materials to group representatives, calling out names. Students come to center and get them from the teachers. Noise level rises.
> Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
> Mr. Hathaway: "Everybody listen." (Room becomes quieter.)
> Mr. Hathaway tells students that they must copy their seating charts on the overhead projector acetate.

Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway tells students to put their things away.
Mrs. Anderson tells students to put their pencils down.
Mr. Hathaway tells students that their next step is to draw up a menu to suit a once in a lifetime opportunity.
Students whisper.
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh." She tells students that they have quite a bit of paper now and can use the back of a piece they already have to write up their menu. Tells students to discuss it, that there should be give and take there, too.
Mr. Hathaway calls out names of two or three boys whom he says are not listening.
Mrs. Anderson tells students to just list a menu, that they don't have to figure quantities.

2:17 Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway tells students that they are to plan a main course, dessert, beverage.
Mrs. Anderson tells students also, a vegetable.
Mrs. Anderson: "Shh."
Mr. Hathaway: "I can't hear Angelo because students are talking."
Mr. Hathaway (to Mrs. Anderson): "Shall we tell them about entertainment, then?"
Mrs. Anderson: "Might as well."
Mrs. Anderson: "Jenny, put your pencil down, please."
Mr. Hathaway (in answer to student query): "...extremely rude to ask them [the guests] to entertain."
Mr. Hathaway tells students that next week they will be asked to explain what they do at the dinner party, explain also the people chosen, seating chart, menus and the whys of choosing these.

2:22 Mr. Hathaway: "You've got the twenty minutes to work. Use your time wisely."
(Mrs. Anderson leaves rooms for supplies.)
(Mr. Hathaway stands near Mrs. Anderson's desk.)
(Field Notes, 1/30/80)

The observer noted that the children worked together smoothly as they exchanged their ideas, often nodding in unison, physically moving together, and sitting on their knees in their chairs. The

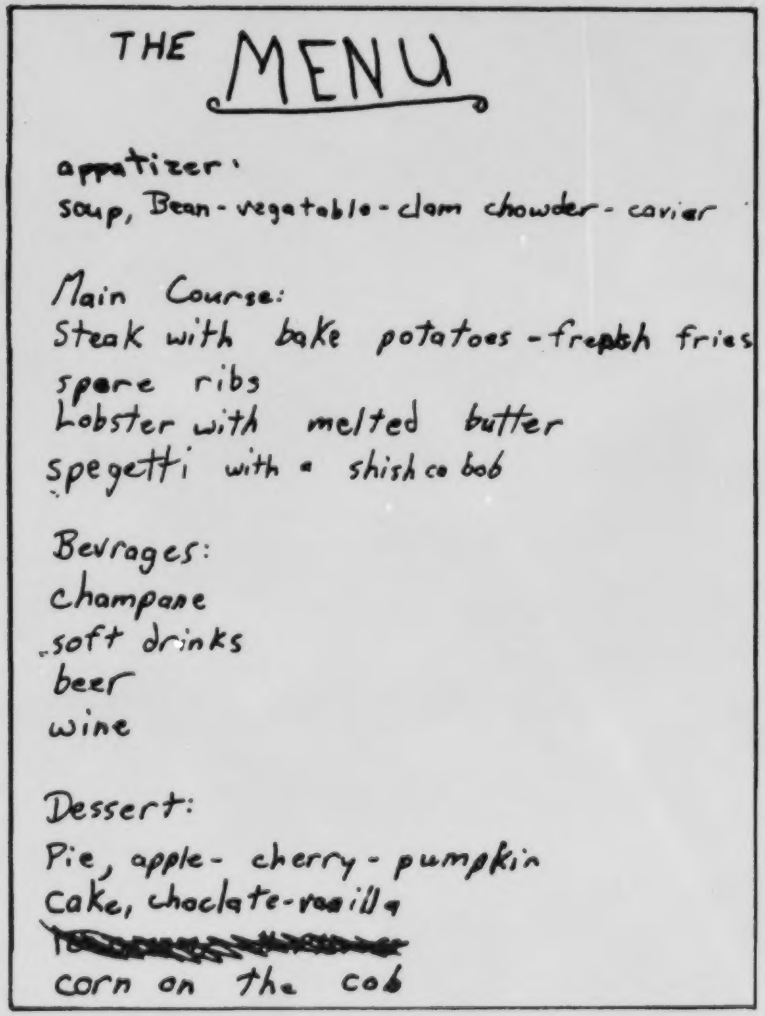
observer recorded that this part of the activity stimulated the group members' discussion. Mrs. Anderson also noted this discussion which she later reflected on in an interview. In comparing this activity with other writing assignments for the year, she categorized it with those activities that provided the most student-initiated (non-teacher-directed) discussion (Interview Notes, 2/13/80). Two examples of the students' party menus are shown in Figure 16. Seating arrangement diagrams and entertainment plans are shown in Figure 17 to provide a complete picture of the dinner party plans.

After the students finished this stage of the activity they transferred their plans onto acetate to display on the overhead projector for their group presentations, the final stage of this activity.

Days 4 and 5. On the last two days of this occasion the student groups presented their dinner party plans to their classmates. Each student discussed one or more parts of the plans according to their group assignment.

The observer noted that the students listened attentively and were generally appreciative of the presentations. They laughed at certain things, such as corn-on-the-cob for dessert, and always applauded at the end of each presentation. The students often asked questions of the presenters regarding the rationale for their party plans.

At the end of the fifth day, Mr. Hathaway told the class that the teachers enjoyed the presentations and that the students had



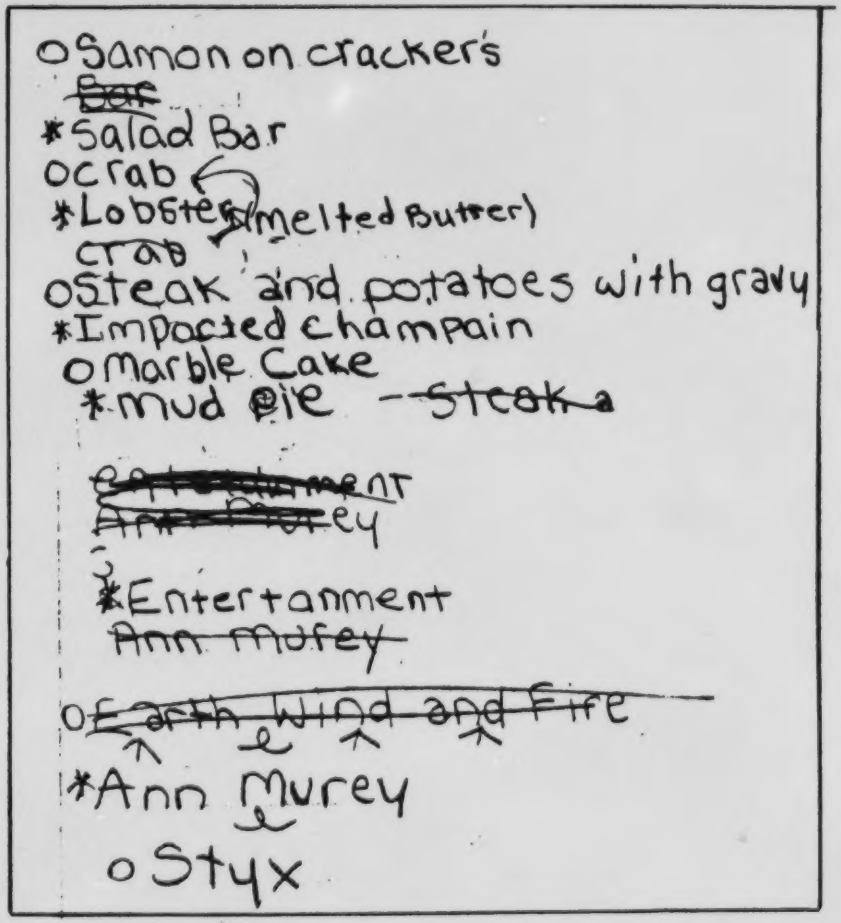
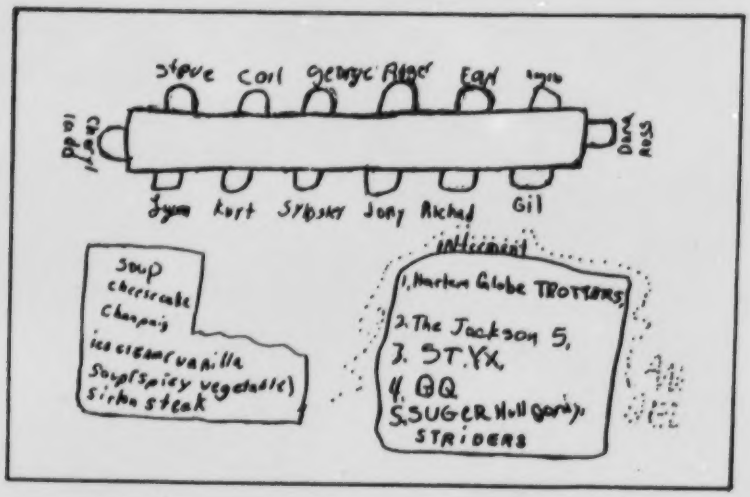


Figure 16. Dinner party sample menus.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



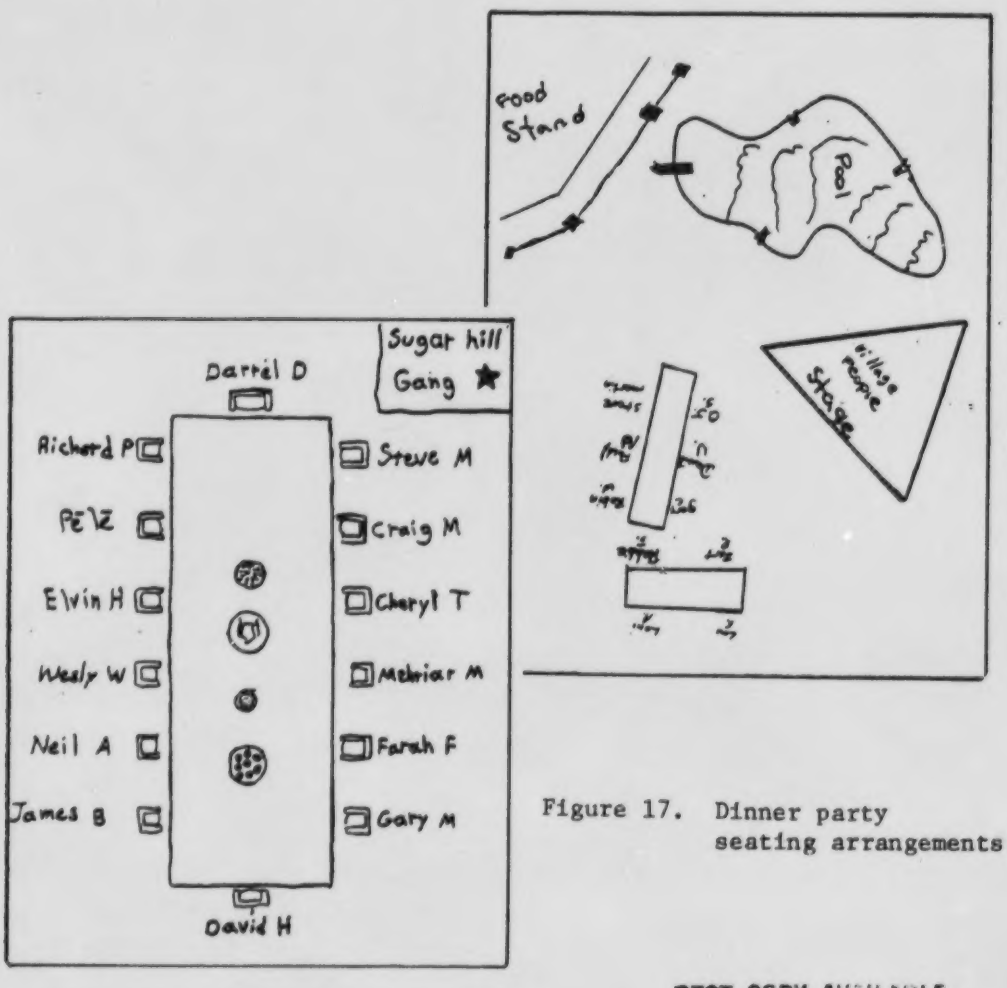


Figure 17. Dinner party seating arrangements.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

achieved the main objectives of the activity:

--to learn to work with a small group of people,
--to learn how to come to a decision,
--to be able to disagree with a group,
--to be able to compromise, and
--to be happy with the decision-making process.

Finally, the teachers said that they observed that the students behave differently sometimes in different situations (e.g., large and small groups), suggesting that cooperation is necessary, and that students sometimes must compromise to help solve a group problem (Field Notes, 2/13/80).

Fate and Closure

The students, as the audience, provided the fate and closure to this writing occasion. They acted as both producers and consumers. The teachers set up the situations and goals for this production and its consumption to take place. The students served as evaluators through their reactions to the group products. An entry in Mrs. Anderson's journal indicated that she did not plan to evaluate the student writings: she wrote that "most of it will never go beyond the rough draft stage." Instead, she was more concerned with evaluating the group problem solving processes--"helping those who have difficulty functioning in a group activity" (Journal, 1/18/80).

Conclusions

This social studies activity provided students with several learning experiences and the opportunity to creatively express

themselves through writing and speech. Basically, the students learned to group problem solve and perhaps discover some principles of group process. In a more general sense they learned to identify and share with others parts of their lives that they find important and meaningful. Writing helped them express, record, and communicate these ideas and feelings. Writing served as an important and necessary means to the ends of group problem solving, planning, sustaining a complex set of activities over several weeks, and of communicating the results of these deliberations to the entire class.

Researching the World:
A Sixth-Grade Writing Project

Individual student research about cities of the world completed during the third marking period of the school year was a complex writing occasion that grew out of earlier writing activities. Principal forerunners were the Life Book, completed in September, and the Magazine Project, completed in December.

Description of the Project

Students enacted this culminating writing occasion during the months of January, February, and March, both within and outside of approximately 38 class sessions. Participants in this project were primarily the teacher, Mrs. Anderson, approximately 60 students (in two classes), and the school head librarian.

Mrs. Anderson identified three basic phases of the writing occasion: first, a preparatory phase in which she introduced students to the basic skills needed for searching out information in a systematic manner and for writing the content of their papers, second, a content phase, in which Mrs. Anderson guided students through steps of drafting and formulating their written reports, and third, a presentation phase in which she assested students in creating visual aids and in preparing for oral presentations of their reports.

The preparatory phase. The preparatory phase of the Researching the World occasion consisted of nine class sessions over a period of

approximately three weeks (January 22, 1980 through February 7, 1980). Mrs. Anderson provided an overview of this phase in her journal:

> This week I have been getting materials together so they can start on their research papers soon. I plan to start with some orientations to the library, especially the card catalogue and the Reader's Guide--and the writing of a bibliography. (Journal, 1/15/80)

Mrs. Anderson did not assume that just because students have had an orientation to the library at the beginning of the school year that they acquired the necessary research skills for completing the project:

> Mrs. Anderson tells me after class that students already know something about the card catalogue and use of the library, but are missing some skills. Thus she taught this lesson so that she wouldn't have to answer many questions tomorrow when students use the library. (Field Notes, 1/22/80)

During the class sessions Mrs. Anderson explained the use of the Dewey Decimal system and the card catalog. The librarian guided students through the process of using the Reader's Guide, and Mrs. Anderson described the manner of writing different types of bibliography entries. She expected students to learn to locate and record information more independently as they spent several class sessions exploring library resources. She collected, evaluated, returned and reviewed (with students) information they had recorded on their three worksheets in the process of using the card catalog and Dewey Decimal system, but only surveyed students about the progress they were making in recording information found in the Reader's Guide. Mrs. Anderson expected that only a few students would want or need to use current resources, thus the relatively cursory treatment of the students'

Reader's Guide notes. Since she would require three different types of bibliography entries in phase two, she did edit, evaluate, return, and review the practice entries students had listed.

The content phase. In the second phase of Researching the World students used many of the skills and procedures they had practiced both in earlier writing projects (e.g., Life Book, Magazine, weekly themes) and in the immediate preparatory skill development lessons. The content phase consisted of 21 class sessions over the course of about four weeks (February 8 through March 4). The students selected and developed the actual content of their research papers as Mrs. Anderson guided them through successive stages of choosing a topic, developing an outline, discovering and abstracting data from a variety of resources, writing a rough draft, and completing the various requirements for their booklet formats.

Mrs. Anderson described how she initiated this phase:

> On Friday I announced the topic of the research paper would be a city someplace other than the U.S. Then we brainstormed quite a list--I put them on the overhead--just from names students knew or, finally, by looking at atlases. Each student listed three cities he/she would be willing to research--and starred any city they especially wanted to do, along with a sentence explaining why. I have managed to assign everyone one of their three choices and will give the students those assignments on Monday. (Journal, 2/8/80)

That same Friday, in the afternoon, she also recorded one class of students' ideas for outline headings and subtopics on the overhead projector. She then showed the second class of students what the first class had contributed and invited them to add to the outline

of ideas. The following week, Mrs. Anderson assigned research topics to students, and combined the ideas of both classes into one outline that she duplicated and distributed to each student in both classes.

At least 10 sessions of the lessons in the content phase of Researching the World were characterized by student activity in the library. In most class periods Mrs. Anderson gave a brief (five-minute) introduction in the classroom to available resources, then sent students to the library to search for information on their respective topics and record it under the general headings and sub-headings of the outline. In one of the earlier sessions she called students back to the classroom and offered suggestions to them for improving their note-taking skills:

> 1:30 (Library) Students are located mostly in the central section of the library. The have outline copies with them and are using atlases, encyclopedias, the card catalog, geography books about one country...
>
> 1:55 (Classroom)...Mrs. Anderson tells students that now that she has observed them working, she has suggestions that would be helpful. She tells them not to approach an article with a closed mind, e.g., with the sole purpose of finding the population first. She explains that they may not find the population for two weeks--if ever. She suggests that the students read a couple of paragraphs, then take notes on what they find. (Field Notes, 2/12/80)

But by the end of the week Mrs. Anderson wrote:

> I did manage--on Wednesday, and Friday--to squeeze in some time in the library to work on the research projects. Most of the students are finding a nice variety of materials with a minimal amount of assistance from me or the librarian. It appears that the outline has been helpful and is eliminating some of the copying I've seen other years. (Journal, 2/15/80)

About midway in the note-gathering process Mrs. Anderson explained her guidelines for writing components of the final report:

9:22 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she will review what is on the sheet, explains how she will evaluate. Mrs. Anderson shows on the overhead projector: I. Cover--Title. She tells students that they can have a design on their covers, asks them: "Does the title have to be the name of the city?" She gives examples of descriptions that might fit a city and asks students if these would be acceptable...Mrs. Anderson illustrates on the overhead projector: scribbles 'Berlin' inside a rectangle (to represent a book cover). She tells students that they can go to the library and ask for stencils--"at least it shows more effort," or they can cut out letters from magazines. She suggests that they think about designing a cover, maybe a map...

9:30 On the overhead projector Mrs. Anderson writes: II. Title page. She asks students what information the title page has to have on it. Three different students respond with "title," "author," and "date" respectively. On the overhead projector next to "Title page," Mrs. Anderson writes: title, author, date. She shows students the cover and title page of a library book, and illustrates ways of doing cover and title pages.

9:34 Mrs. Anderson: "Take out your outline, the one you've been taking notes on in the library." ...Noise level rises as students take out their outlines.

9:35 Mrs. Anderson draws table of contents page on the overhead projector and explains what she has written. She uses a social studies book to illustrate captions and sections.

9:40 Mrs. Anderson writes on the overhead projector: III. Table of contents--sections, page number, bibliography page. Mrs. Anderson asks students to look at the very last page of their outlines. She cautions them that everyone won't be able to fill out all of the outline sections...

9:44 Mrs. Anderson tells students that the body of the report will be like a theme and writes on the overhead projector: IV. Body of report.

9:45 Mrs. Anderson then adds more to the outline: V. Bibliography. She turns off the overhead projector...

9:46 Mrs. Anderson passes out another paper to students entitled "Evaluation for Special Written Report"...She tells students that for every day the

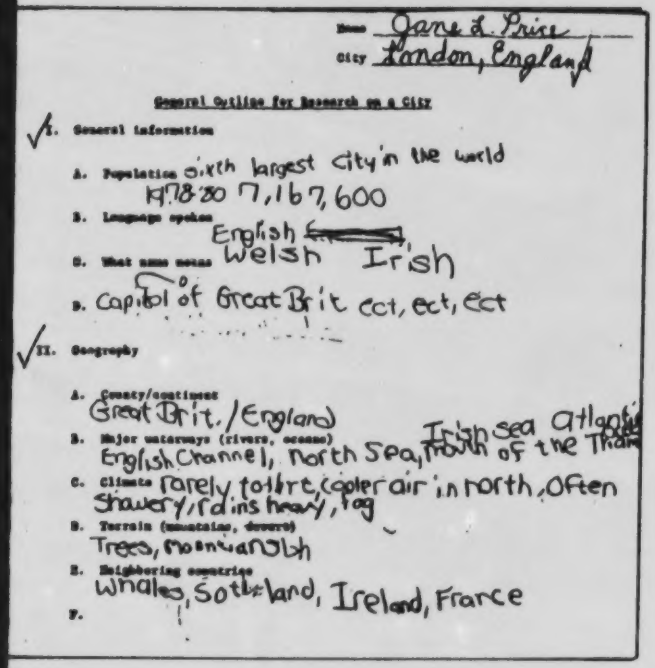
> research report is submitted late that she will penalize the student one point...
>
> 9:58 Mrs. Anderson explains the "extras" listed on the evaluation sheets--tells students that she will talk about this later because she doesn't want them to be late for gym class. Students leave quickly--all have left the room in about 30 seconds. (Field Notes, 2/19/80)

After a few more days of note-gathering Mrs. Anderson asked her students to submit their outline notes, and when she returned them, indicated to students that either they had sufficient information and could begin their rough drafts, or that they needed to gather additional notes or complete their bibliographic entries before writing their drafts. She informed students that she would not collect their rough drafts because she intended to monitor progress as students wrote them. Mrs. Anderson explained a means of relating outline section notes to drafting of paragraphs:

> 9:35 Mrs. Anderson comments that the people going to the library have gone...The rest of you are going to get started. "Shh" (she waits)..."I'll say this once." She explains that students may think of each section of the outline as a paragraph, or maybe combine two sections...and that after the first two sections they could do things in any order. (Field Notes, 2/26/80)

The following figure (Figure 18) is an excerpt from one student's outline and rough draft written from the first two sections of her outline notes.

In late February, Mrs. Anderson became ill and decided to take a week at home to recuperate. To keep the momentum going on the Researching the World project, she planned a detailed schedule of activities for completing the research project and explained it to her students. She recorded an account of her planning in her



Name Jane L. Price
City London, England

General Outline for Research on a City

√I. General information

A. Population sixth largest city in the world
1978-80 7,167,600

B. Language spoken English ~~French~~, Welsh Irish

C. What some notes

D. Capitol of Great Brit ect, ect, ect

√II. Geography

A. County/continent
Great Brit./England

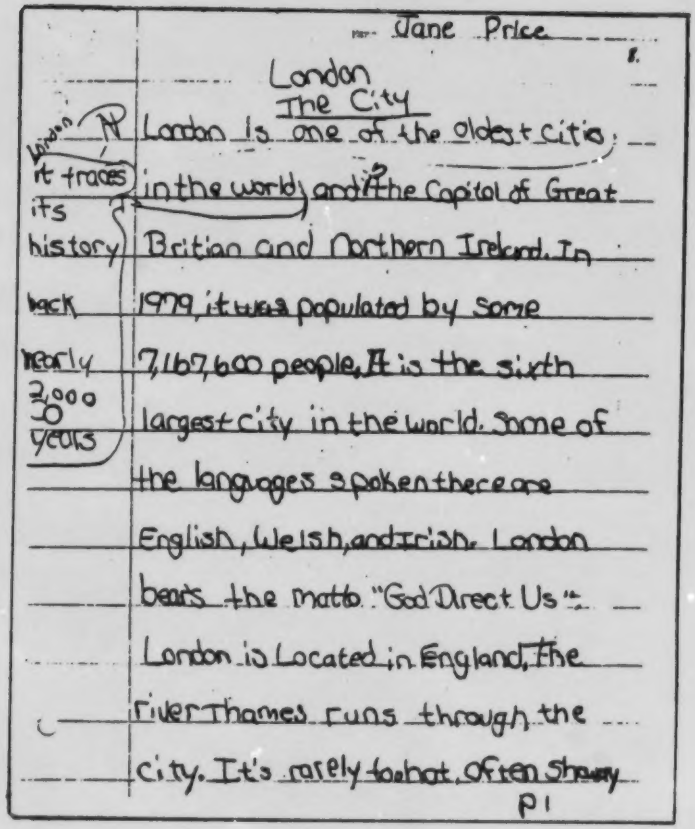
B. Major waterways (rivers, oceans)
English Channel, North Sea, Irish sea Atlantic mouth of the Thame

C. Climate rarely to hot, cooler air in north, often showery/rainy, fog

D. Terrain (mountains, desert)
Trees, mountainous

E. Neighboring countries
Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France

F.



Jane Price
8.

London
The City

London is one of the oldest cities in the world and the Capitol of Great Britian and Northern Ireland. In 1979, it was populated by some 7,167,600 people. It is the sixth largest city in the world. Some of the languages spoken there are English, Welsh, and Irish. London bears the motto "God Direct Us". London is located in England. The river Thames runs through the city. It's rarely too hot, often showery

P1

Figure 18. Student outline and rough draft for research project.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

February 27 journal entry:

> I went to school on Tuesday because I felt that if I could get the students started on their rough drafts they could proceed with a substitute teacher in the room while I stayed home to recover. I told them I wouldn't be in for a few days and to follow the guidelines I left carefully because the finished report would still be due next Tuesday, March 4. The guidelines I left for the students went something like this:

Day	Class Time	What to Do
Tues. a.m.	30 min.	Work on rough draft
Tues. p.m.	45 min.	"
Wed. a.m.	45 min.	"
Wed. p.m.	45 min.	"
Thurs. p.m.	60 min.	Finish rough draft; make cover, title page, etc.
Fri. a.m.	60 min.	Write final draft
Mon.	45 min.	Complete
Tues.	30 min.	Turn in

When Mrs. Anderson returned to school the following Monday she discovered that several students had also been absent during the previous week. She then announced that they would have additional time to complete their reports:

> 1:56 Mrs. Anderson tells students that she was not the only one absent last week--two students were out five days last week. She says that they have an extra five days without penalty to complete their reports. She explains that students who were absent one day have until Wednesday, and if absent two days they have until Thursday, and so on. (Field Notes, 3/30/80)

Mrs. Anderson also informed students that she had received a request that they display their work during a Middle School teachers' conference to be held at the school during the following week. She suggested that they display their research reports (as well as the Life Books and Magazines they had created during the previous semester).

As students submitted their completed booklets Mrs. Anderson evaluated them using the evaluation criteria she had previously explained and reviewed with students. She then returned them so that students could prepare for their oral presentations.

The presentation phase. The presentation phase of Researching the World was both a means of sharing the content of the research papers with other students and a way of meeting Mrs. Anderson's requirement that each student give one oral report each quarter. This phase consisted of eight class sessions that took place from March 4 through March 12. During these sessions students prepared visual aids (e.g., maps) to use when they would present their research reports orally to their teacher and classmates. Mrs. Anderson demonstrated how not to read a report and how not to use a visual aid. Students evaluated her performances and Mrs. Anderson later evaluated student oral presentations of their written reports as well as the visual aids they prepared and used to illustrate their findings.

Teacher and Student Roles

Teacher role. Mrs. Anderson had customarily done a research project with her sixth-grade students at this time of year. This time she modified her planning and implementation of the occasion in several ways. She changed the topic area from the usual one of "myths" to one of "cities." She decided on this change in order to rekindle her own interest in the project and because sufficient resources for all (60) students could be made available--mainly from

the school library:

> Mrs. Anderson tells students: "I had to choose a research topic broad enough so that there would be something for everyone on the topic in the library...it is devastating to go to the library and find nothing on the topic. I have seen this happen." (Field Notes, 2/8/80)

Mrs. Anderson also experimented with an outline format for note gathering, leaving space for note-taking, and with means for encouraging students to edit their rough drafts using wide-lined paper:

> Over the weekend as I thought about putting the students' outline on a ditto, I had another idea that might make that outline more meaningful for them. I will have the secretary triple space the outline and then students can use that paper for the recording of their notes. Perhaps this will also cut down on copying of sentences word for word and encourage "notes." Another plus might be that it could help students organize their own papers into paragraphs or sections. I've never provided such a structured guide before so it will be interesting to see what happens. (Journal, 2/11/80)
>
> On the way to school this a.m. I was rethinking the outline the secretary was going to type when it hit me that an extra sheet stapled on with the label "Bibliography Info" might help the students remember to jot down that info as they finished using each source. In other years a common problem has been the kids would lose--or never write down in the first place--info on the sources they used. And, so often they couldn't relocate the material to get the information. I also have decided to have them turn in their outlines, or at least present them in class, several times during the course of the project so I can keep tabs on their note taking. (Journal, 2/12/80)

Her intention was to shorten the data gathering and writing processes to two weeks, but unforeseen circumstances such as limited availability of the library facilities, changes in school scheduleing, and illness (her own and that of students) served to extend the duration of the

activities or phases of the project, and changed the nature of phase three. Originally Mrs. Anderson intended that oral reports be given from notes in the manner of an earlier speech-giving occasion, but due to the length of reports and time constraints, she encouraged students to develop skill in oral reading of their reports.

Student role. Students had many choices within the framework of the project as Mrs. Anderson outlined it for them. However, she made no significant changes in her original plans because of unforeseen student problems. Perhaps this is because Mrs. Anderson had already enacted similar plans with students in previous years and had already taken most of the bugs out of it. Furthermore, this project was done in mid-year, after much preparatory work in writing, and thus the teacher was familiar with student writing abilities and dispositions. Consequently, she could anticipate many of their needs and patterns of response. By this time students were also familiar with Mrs. Anderson's expectations.

Personal Meaning of the Project

Both students and teacher related aspects of the Researching the World occasion to their lives outside the classroom. Students chose topics according to current outside interests and/or according to anticipated future events (e.g., one student chose Jerusalem because his father had promised him a trip to Israel on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah; another student wrote about Teheran, an area of current national interest because of the oil embargoes and hostage crisis).

Both places of work and types of resources used to gather information brought students and teacher to familiar environs outside the classroom. Mrs. Anderson obtained research materials she selected to suit individual student needs from her home, from a neighboring elementary school, and from the social studies office of the middle school in which she was teaching. She also called upon the school librarian to assist her in preparatory phases of the project, and she made arrangements for students to use the school library on several occasions. The students not only used resources in their school library but explored possible opportunities to use local public libraries, and resources available at their homes (e.g., almanac, tourist guidebooks, assistance from parents).

Mrs. Anderson expected that the experience and skills gained by students as they learned the fundamentals of compiling a research paper would serve them well in completing research activities and projects required in future school years. Researching the World was both the culmination of the sixth-grade writing curriculum and the beginning of a form of academic writing that the students would encounter again and again in middle school, high school, and college.

CHAPTER 5

THE FUNCTIONS OF WRITING IN TWO CLASSROOMS

Introduction

The preceding case studies offer a taste of the ways in which writing manifests itself in the everyday life of Ms. Donovan's elementary and Mrs. Anderson's middle school classrooms. Occasions for writing are sufficiently complex units of both instruction and communication that it is not surprising to find that they are the means to realize broad social and academic functions. In this chapter the functions of writing that were realized in the two classrooms will be described.

The study was instituted with an interest in the social situations in which students' written products arise and in which their beliefs and values about writing and its use are shaped. Toward these ends, guiding questions raised in the processes of collecting and analyzing data included the following: What opportunities for writing do students find in school? How is writing used by students to meet those opportunities? How do teachers and students differentiate among the functions of writing and the forms appropriate to them? What contextual forces are operant in this process?

Our approach to the study of writing in classrooms was strongly influenced by sociolinguistics and ethnography. As such it views writing holistically--not as a series of discrete skills to be

mastered, but as a cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978). Viewed in this light, writing is studied as it is used by members of a community. This focus on function stands in sharp contrast to other ways of studying language that have typically emphasized mastery of form (Shuy, 1981). To study the process of acquisition of written literacy in this way, the researcher does not measure written linguistic output, but, instead, in Basso's (1977) words,

> focuses upon writing as a form of communicative activity and takes as a major objective the analysis of the structure and function of this activity in a broad range of human societies. (p. 426)

In our own society, this sort of study is particularly appropriate in schools and classrooms where, despite intensive efforts in the area of reading instruction, writing has been generally neglected in both curriculum and instruction.

Scholars of language and culture have expressed concern about the adequacy of the classroom as an environment for learning to write. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1978), for example, have argued that schools in our culture too narrowly define both literacy's functions and the skills necessary to realize them. Shuy (Note 9), echoes this concern. He points out that while children have mastered a broad range of oral language functions by the time they enter school, most have not had much experience in writing. School, a public and institutional place, is typified by a formal language register and activities that are teacher-generated, monologic, and not functional in children's other social lives. Such a learning environment limits children's opportunities to acquire a rich range of language forms and functions.

For writing, which is generally not acquired to the degree that speech is in the home, the consequence is that children may never practice parts of the written communication repertoire that are self-generated, transactional, and useful in everyday life (Shuy, Note 9). If such is the case, children's competence in writing may never be fully realized, not despite their formal education, but as a consequence of it.

These are disturbing and powerful suggestions about the classroom as an environment for writing. They prompt closer examination of occasions for writing in our two classrooms asking, in Basso's (1977) words, "what position does writing occupy in the total communicative economy of the society under study and what is the range of its cultural meanings?" (p. 432). The remainder of this chapter addresses these questions by examining the functions served by writing in the two classrooms studied.

Overview of the Four Functions

As the case studies show, life in these two classrooms is varied. In each classroom there are both scheduled and impromptu opportunities to learn. There are group and individual activities, teacher-led and free times. Communication in the classrooms reflects this social and academic diversity, and although each classroom has its own unique flavor, writing in both classrooms arises out of particular intellectual and social needs and opportunities presented by the school in general and the classroom in particular.

Before offering a detailed discussion of the functions of writing in the two classrooms, some discussion of the process by which those

functions and their distinctive features were inferred is provided. Since the research project was oriented to discovery, fieldworkers did not limit their sights to activities explicitly involving writing and its instruction. Instead, pains were taken to spend considerable time in the two schools and classrooms observing and sharing in the round of daily activities and gradually noting patterns in the use of writing by the teachers and students. Similarly, when teachers and students were asked questions about writing in both formal and informal interviews, the questions came at first in terms of the larger context of their classroom life. Finally, in the same spirit, student writings and drawings were collected widely and in large quantity. Gradually, the documents were classified, but with an eye toward how they related to classroom activity and with the help of students and teachers.

In both sites, it quickly became evident that writing and its instruction were meaningfully organized not into discrete units such as lessons, but into broader units of related activities that integrated a range of skills and served broad social and academic functions. To learn more about how these units, called occasions for writing, fit into the social and academic fabric of the classrooms under study, we framed and tested working hypotheses about the types of functions the occasions for writing were performing in the classroom. As we generated these hypotheses about how teachers and students might be using writing, we tested them against subsequent instances of classroom activity. In this enterprise we sought meaningful contrasts in the use of writing, and those aspects of writing

activities that appeared to make a difference to participants were noted.

Four broad functions were thus identified, first in the second/third-grade classroom and later in the sixth. These functions appeared to be integrally related to classroom life and were the following:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time, and
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

These four functions are sufficiently broad to characterize the writing done in both classroom settings. However, because of contextual differences including student age, grade, school, and teacher, their realization differs in many interesting ways in the two classes studied. Table 1 shows the four functions of writing identified in the two classrooms and illustrates them with sample occasions for writing. The table is derived from field notes, teacher journals, interviews, and work samples collected during the 1979-80 academic year. It illustrates that writing is used to serve multiple purposes including, but not limited to, skill assessment and practice in the language arts. Writing also functions in setting the social climate of the classroom, in getting to know others, in reflecting upon one's experiences during the day, in recreation, and in the service of academic activities not explicitly related to language arts. Table 1 also shows that occasions for writing differ along particular dimensions of the writing act in these two classrooms. Some of these dimensions apply in most writing

Table 1

The Functions of Writing and their Distinctive Features

FUNCTION TYPE	(GRADE) SAMPLE ACTIVITY	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES						
		INITIATOR	COMPOSER	WRITER/ SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	FATE	EVALU-ATION
TYPE I: WRITING TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY	(2/3) classroom rules	teacher	teacher & students	teacher	class-mates	by teacher and students; jointly rendered rules are drafted on chalkboard; printed in colored marker on large white paper by teacher	posted; referred to when broken	no
	(6) magazines	teacher	teacher & students	student	magazine subscribers	by teacher; she provides magazines of former students as models	read by teacher; may be displayed for reading by classmates; taken home	yes
TYPE II: WRITING TO KNOW ONESELF AND OTHERS	(2/3) diaries	teacher	student	student	self	by teacher; she models from literature and oversees making of the diaries; students write or print on lined paper in booklets they have made	kept in teacher's file cabinet or in student desks; occasionally shared with teacher, other students, or family	no
	(6) life books	teacher	teacher & students	student	class-mates	by teacher; her own work is used as a model	read by teacher, classmates, parents, other students	yes
TYPE III: WRITING TO OCCUPY FREE TIME	(2/3) stories, letters, and cards	student	student	student	other (parents, friends, family)	by student; printed or drawn on lined or construction paper	kept; may be given as gift to parent or friend	no
	(6) cartoons & stories	student	student	student	self or others (parents, friends, family)	by student; written or drawn on notebook paper, may be re-copied	kept; may be shared or not be shared; when shared, it is usually with a friend.	no
TYPE IV: WRITING TO DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC COMPETENCE	(2/3) science lab booklets	teacher	publisher	publisher and student	teacher	by publisher; printed in commercial booklet in which students also write	checked by teacher; filed for later use; pages sent home to parents by teacher	yes
	(6) research project	teacher	teacher & students	teacher & students	teacher & class-mates	by teacher; students draft their research project on dittoed outline & note sheets	read by teacher: presented orally to classmates; displayed at teacher conference	yes

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

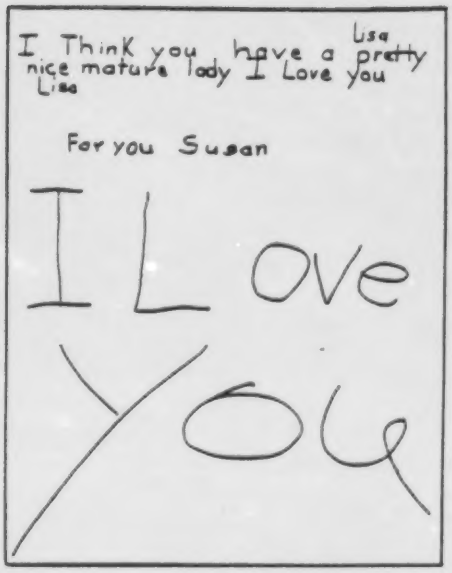
activities and have been singled out for attention by other theorists of writing. Others, however, appear to arise uniquely in the institutional setting of the school. The dimensions identified in this study included the initiator of the occasion for writing, the composer of the written product, the person(s) who actually write(s) the document, the intended audience for the writing, the format of the document (and the person(s) who plan that format), the ultimate fate of the written product, and the presence or absence of evaluation of the writing.

With Table 1 it is possible to take a closer look at the functions of writing, first in the elementary classroom and then in the middle school classroom. In so doing, comparisons and contrasts will be drawn both among functions within each setting and between the functions as realized in the two settings.

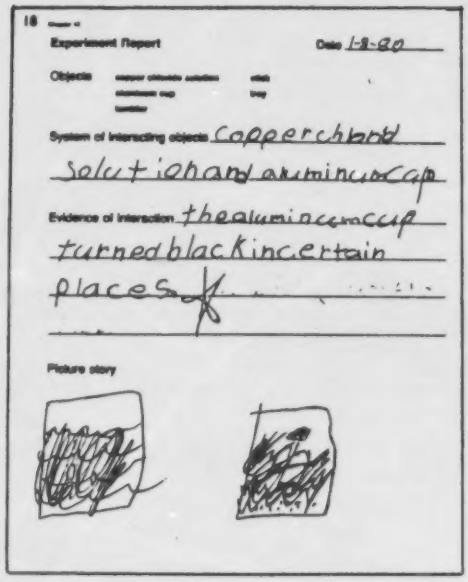
A Closer Look at the Four Functions in the Elementary Classroom

Implicit in Table 1 is the insight that literacy resides not entirely in the production of documents, but also in a complex of social roles, expressive purposes, and resources for writing. Different configurations of these features occur with different expressive purposes and, as Figure 19 illustrates, different documents result.

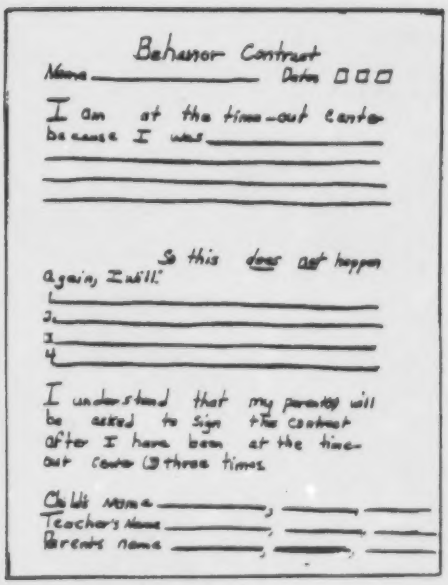
Writing to participate in community. Writing as participation in community is exemplified by the efforts of Ms. Donovan and her students to set and enforce rules of social conduct in their corner of Room Twelve. The composing of rules was undertaken collectively, with children framing and negotiating rules orally in interaction



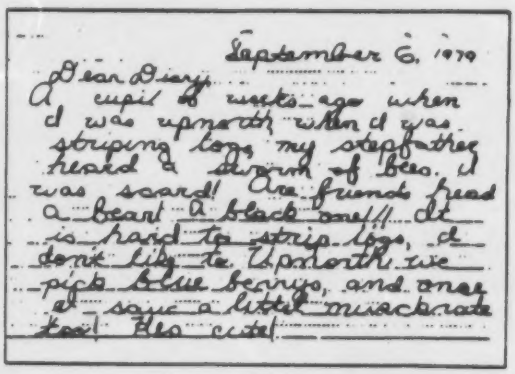
Student Letter


Experiment Report
Date 1-2-80
Objects
System of interacting objects copper chloride solution and aluminum cup
Evidence of interaction the aluminum cup turned black in certain places
Picture story

Lab Booklet Page


Behavior Contract
Name
Date
I am at the time-out center because I was
So this does not happen again, I will.
1.
2.
3.
4.
I understand that my parents will be asked to sign the contract after I have been at the time-out center three times.
Child's name
Teacher's name
Parents name

Behavior Contract


September 6, 1979
Dear Diary,
A cupil of weeks ago when I was upnorth, when I was striping logs my stepfather heard a shrunk of bees. I was scard! Are friends fead a beart a black one!! It is hard to strip logs, it dont like to. Upnorth we pick blue berrys, and ones I saw a little muscknate too! Bes cute!

Diary Page

Figure 19. Documents reflecting the functions of writing in room 12.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

with one another and with guidance from the teacher. Ms. Donovan was the scribe in this activity. At first she worked at the chalkboard, revising the rules as the children discuss them. Then, overnight, she carefully printed the rules in colored marking pen on a large sheet of white butcher paper. She mounted them near the chalkboard. This procedure gave the teacher ultimate control of the format of the written rules that had been jointly composed. This way of writing classroom rules is consistent with the spirit of open education shared among the teachers of Room 12. The teachers encouraged students to devise classroom rules and to arrive at understandings of social relations inductively. However, in keeping with the need for order and coordination in a room containing so many children and a wide variety of social arrangements for teaching and learning, Ms. Donovan reported that the teachers reached consensus in advance on what the "discovered" classroom rules would be (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

Rule-setting enabled a particular kind of writing in which many of the processes usually undertaken by the individual author are shared by all of the students in interactions with their teacher. The process of deliberation worked toward consensus before the rules were in place. The act of writing them down at the board, where they could be easily erased, negotiated, and modified, was akin to producing a working draft. The final step of recording on paper what has been agreed to conveyed one potent function of writing: to specify and render binding social compacts. Public display of the rules rendered the other students in Room 12 accountable to observe them.

The collective creation of a written document has powerful pedagogical implications. The teacher reported that this sort of activity enabled the participation of all--even second graders who may have forgotten how to write their alphabet letters over the summer (Interview, 8/6/80). In addition, two key aspects of the writing process--composition and revision--are undertaken by the children in an oral rather than a written mode, thus moving them gradually into writing. Finally, the collective effort at composition may, in fact, result in moving each individual cognitively beyond the place s/he might have been if left to generate rule ideas in isolation or if confronted with a teacher-made list.

In Ms. Donovan's corner of Room 12, the rules for class conduct that were generated and written down were invoked as they were broken. In fact, long into the year, written rules were periodically referred to when Ms. Donovan sanctioned behavior. A formal scoial and written mechanism existed wherein students could engage in reflection both upon the rules that had been recorded and upon the consequences of breaking them. It was the writing of a behavior contract (See Figure 19). Like the rules themselves, the behavior contract was a collaboration between teacher and student. Ms. Donovan printed the contract and constrained the topic of student writing, but within those limits the student expressed her/his account of the offense and framed in writing a way to prevent its reoccurence. Ms. Donovan and the student then signed the contract. Again, by means of a jointly composed and public document, an air of the official nature of the activity was created. In addition, contracts were kept on

record and, upon the third offense, a parent signature was added to the already-present signatures of teacher and student. This type of writing, in both rule-generation and enforcement, codified the social norms of the group and helped the group to regulate social behavior.

Writing to demonstrate academic competence. Another type of writing that is both public and collaborative but in quite different ways occurred when students wrote as part of academic performance. Here the purpose was not explication of social relations in the classroom, but the performance of academic tasks. A page from a SCIIS science lab booklet is shown in Figure 19 to exemplify the documents produced when this function was undertaken. Like rule-setting, this is a teacher-initiated activity and it is the only type of writing that received formal evaluation from the teacher (see star on the lab booklet page). This time writers worked in privacy, but they still collaborated on the documents produced. Academic writing is the only type of writing that was typically both composed and formatted by an outside third party--the publisher. This fact, so commonplace in classrooms in our culture, was at first taken for granted by the researchers. However, when students were asked to sort and talk about their written work, they consistently grouped worksheets and workbook pages together because they were produced "by machine" (Interview Notes, 6/6/80).

Some writing as academic performance was intended for practice and assessment of writing skills themselves, but much of it was writing in the service of other academic ends. Writing could serve

in these cases as an aid to memory, as description resulting in insights about phenomena (as in the experiment report), and as explanation to the teacher-audience that the student had learned a concept. Both the rule-setting and behavior contract activities and the academic performance activities called upon students to engage in a variety of discourse functions including explanation and description. However, they were not activities that were generated or ultimately controlled by the students--the topic was constrained, the format of the writing was limited, and the function of the writing was predetermined by others. These two functions of writing were observed throughout the year and are those most typically associated with formal school writing.

Writing was not limited to rule-setting and academic performance. Two major functions of writing were undertaken in Room 12 in which students had considerably more control over the features of the activity and that were closer to students' everyday experience outside school. These function types, writing to know oneself and others and writing to occupy free time, are the least formal types of classroom writing. They are not shared publicly nor are they evaluated. Although in the case of writing to know oneself and others the writing activity was typically initiated and formatted by the teacher, the students generated and wrote the text, and their efforts were acknowledged by the teacher while not being formally evaluated. In writing to occupy free time, the teacher enabled the process by providing room for it in the school day, but, as can be seen in Table 1, the students controlled all other facets of the activity.

Writing to know oneself and others. As is evident in the case studies of Diary Time, Pen Pals, and the Safety Posters, students wrote to get to know themselves and others better. In an ever-widening circle that began with knowing their classmates in Room 12 and grew to knowing the community in which they lived, students produced a variety of documents. They wrote in diaries (see Figure 19) that recorded their experiences and feelings and were private unless voluntarily shared, they wrote around the holidays (everything from Thanksgiving menus and recipes for a class dinner to New Year's resolutions), and they wrote class books recounting field trips.

Writing to know oneself and others better was an interesting function of written literacy in Room 12 in large part because it is at the cusp of purely private and personal writing (e.g., writing to occupy free time) and the more formal and public school-oriented writings previously discussed. It is perhaps the only function of writing in the elementary classroom that fully realized the concept of an occasion for writing. This type of writing relied on the teacher often to seize the moment--perceiving an experience that had happened spontaneously and captured the students' imaginations, and turning it into an occasion for writing. It relied on her as well to free the children to design and control as much of the writing process as necessary to reach fruition. Sometimes this strategy leads to success, sometimes to disappointment.

An example of such an occasion for writing that had all of these elements was the diary-writing that is documented in Table 1 and

described as a case study. Diary-writing was Ms. Donovan's idea, and she would have liked to institutionalize it as a quiet, reflective writing time in the school day of each child in her class. However, her plans were never fully realized. Detailed study of this occasion revealed that it was the very marginality of the writing function that made the activity both attractive and difficult to institutionalize. Diaries were supposed to be private. Students were to be free of concern about issues of form and audience; they were to write their own thoughts, and Ms. Donovan would write hers. But Table 1 shows us that Diary Time had some distinctive features that greatly resembled other, more formal types of school writing.

Diary Time was scheduled into the school day by the teacher--it was initiated by her. Diaries were kept locked in the teacher's file cabinet to ensure that they would be private, but only official schoolwork was kept in this manner. Diaries were written inside student-made booklets, but the diaries were to be written on official lined paper. While diaries were to be private, they could be shared--and that implied that an audience beyond oneself was at least of some concern. In short, diaries were both a school writing activity and a personal one as they were realized in Room 12. This caused confusion on students' part about both audience and purpose--and that confusion was manifest in student concern for correctness of form and spelling in their diaries and in their lamenting the lack of topics about which to write. Diary Time was not successful for most of the students in that by mid-year it was deleted from the daily schedule and continued by only six or seven students. By that time, however, for those few students, it had been renegotiated to resemble the

next function in our discussion--writing to occupy free time.

Despite the difficulties of diary writing, many of the other instances of writing to know oneself and others better were potent occasions for writing in Room 12. Extended and interconnected opportunities to write arose from activities in and around school and community and on the occasion of cultural events such as holidays. As the case studies of Pen Pals and the Safety Posters illustrate, these occasions were often framed as opportunities to learn about oneself, others, or one's community. This type of writing function, so amenable to the integration of skills and links to community that are benchmarks of occasions for writing, is a highly promising place to begin to construct that part of the school curriculum concerned with acquisition of both writing skills and values about literacy and its power. These possibilities will be explored further in the next chapter.

While writing to know oneself and others was a function that was largely teacher-initiated, it depended on the everyday life experiences of the students for its vitality. In the second/third grade, it occupied the peculiar status among the functions identified of being both an explicit and recognized school function and one in which students had a large measure of control over facets of the composing process. It appears, as well, to have been closely allied with the use to which children put writing when left to their own devices.

Writing to occupy free time. In a busy, crowded place like Room 12, students who isolated themselves with paper and pencil were

most likely to have a bit of quiet time and space. The teachers modeled this by instituting both Diary Time and a time called USR (Uninterrupted Silent Reading) as times when people were to be privately engaged with words. Often children chose to use their free time--which was variable but plentiful in this open-space classroom--to read or write. When children wrote during this time, they produced stories, letters, and cards that were colorful and illustrated. With full control over this function, the students chose a variety of materials on which to draw and write, they planned their own formats, they identified an audience, and they were instrumental in seeing that their documents reached their intended fate. Given such student autonomy, great diversity in writing and its use might be expected. Instead, it was surprising to see that, in general, students used this opportunity to write in intimate, transactional ways. Figure 19 illustrates this with a letter written by one student early in the year to a researcher who had been participating in the classroom. In the letter, which was written on colored paper in magic marker and hand-delivered, the student both compliments the researcher and makes a move toward a relationship with her, suggesting that the researcher is a role model. The letter is personal, spontaneous and self-revealing--and, unlike in the case of diaries, the student wrote it without seeking help with spelling or ideas for a topic.

In the lives of these second/third graders, the function of writing to occupy free time was typically realized as "keeping in touch" or "making contact" with others--often expressing in writing

what would be hard to express face-to-face. Given that half of the children lived in single-parent households, it was common for children to use their private time to make cards and write stories for their absent parents. Additionally, children wrote to one another in the classroom and exchanged letters of invitation to parties and playtimes (see Greene, Note 12, and Florio & Frank, in press, for other examples of this phenomenon).

The Functions of Writing in the Middle School Classroom

Everyday life in Mrs. Anderson's sixth grade-classroom was organized quite differently from life in Room 12. Differences in time available for writing, space within which to work, age of students, nature of the curriculum, and teacher beliefs and experience had implications for the writing that was observed there. However, despite such contextual differences between the two classroom sites, weekly meetings of fieldworkers in both sites and monthly meetings with the focal teachers and their teammates led to the discovery of important similarities between the sites as well. The four functions of writing described in this report are useful ways to categorize writing in both settings, and the occasion for writing as a unit of writing instruction was operant in both classrooms.

A closer look at the functions of writing in the middle school classroom reveals both the uniqueness of that setting and the ways in which it is similar to the elementary setting. Returning to Table 1 to consider the functions of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom, it is important to recall the overall structural difference in the school day in the two classrooms studied. The writing described in

the elementary classroom was observed throughout the day. Ms. Donovan was responsible for instruction in all school subjects except social studies. Thus researchers had the opportunity to observe her and her students engaged in writing for a wide variety of social and academic purposes. In the sixth grade, however, students had several different teachers for their school subjects. Focusing on Mrs. Anderson's teaching limited both the time and school subjects that could be observed. Mrs. Anderson was responsible for instruction in her team in the areas of communication arts and social studies. She was observed as she taught these subjects to two groups of sixth graders--her own and those of Mr. Hathaway's homeroom. This difference in organization of the classes had implications for the type and range of occasions for writing that were observed in her room.

While in Ms. Donovan's room four communicative functions were realized by means of writing, we have already seen that only one of them--writing to know oneself and others--produced extended and interrelated sets of activities we have called occasions for writing. In achieving the other functions, writing was instrumental to such activities as recreation, testing, record-keeping, and rule-setting. In these instances writing was often undertaken in isolated lessons or blocks of time and lacked continuity or integration with other parts of students' lives.

Writing in the sixth-grade communication arts/social studies block taught by Mrs. Anderson was obviously only a part of the writing undertaken in the middle school day. Thus, our data represent somewhat less than fully the range of opportunities to write extant in

the sixth grade. Our documentation is limited to only a part of the school day and curriculum, but, as the preceding case studies have shown, within that part there was extensive interweaving of social and linguistic aims as writing was undertaken in the completion of such occasions for writing as Planning A Dinner Party, the Life Books, the Magazine Project, and Researching the World. It is to that subset of writing experiences and the ways in which they serve to achieve important social and academic functions in Mrs. Anderson's class that we now turn.

Table 1 illustrates the possibility of finding all four function types of writing in Mrs. Anderson's classroom. Like their elementary counterparts, students initiate writing as one way to occupy free time. Although they have far less free time during their scheduled communication arts class periods, students still write stories and cartoons for their own amusement or to share with friends. In addition, and with Mrs. Anderson's leadership, they write to participate in an ever-widening circle of communities from their own class and team to their school, town, and ultimately to the more abstract community where their audience may be separate from them in time, space, and experience. They also write to demonstrate academic competence.

The middle school occasions for writing described in Table 1 and in the case studies differ from those identified in the elementary classroom in that they occur in all three of the major function areas and in that they are related to one another both in content and in time. Perhaps because Mrs. Anderson's students are older and because her time with them is more limited and more focused than

is Ms. Donovan's, Mrs. Anderson endeavors to link occasions for writing to one another across the year, gradually building the complexity of the writing tasks undertaken by the students.

While linkages are seen in the elementary school, they are frequently of the sort that join student to experience outside of school or student to intended audience. In the middle school these sorts of linkages are less prevalent. Students are sometimes asked to write to an imagined audience; often the fate of a written product is not decided upon in advance of its completion. The teacher initiates most of the writing activities, and they may not necessarily arise from or relate directly to the everyday life experience of the students. The integration that occurred in the sixth-grade occasions was far more internal to the writing curriculum--it was integration of skills necessary to complete a given writing assignment across three functions--writing to know oneself and others, writing to participate in community, and writing to demonstrate academic competence.

Early in the year when the sixth graders were new both to middle school and to peers from other East Eden elementary schools, there was both a need and an opportunity to get to know one another. At that time Mrs. Anderson initiated the Life Books. This occasion for writing not only was appropriate in terms of the social situation unfolding, but it resembled writing in the early days of elementary school in that it brought students gradually back into writing. The Life Book required relatively little actual writing and was a highly interactive occasion for writing. Students shared their ideas and

work space and were provided a model in the form of a book prepared by Mrs. Anderson to describe her own life. In addition, students were encouraged to use pictures and drawings to enrich and extend their written expression. And, much like the writing seen in the elementary school, the audience for their writing was real and immediate--the classmates whom they were coming to know.

The Magazine Project was an occasion for writing that built upon the Life Books both in terms of the writing required to complete it and in light of the growing sense of the class as a social unit. Once the students had begun to know one another, they turned their attention outward. While the actual audience for their writing continued to include their classmates, Table 1 illustrates that their intended audience in subsequent writing occasions was somewhat different. Eventually the magazines that the students wrote would be read by their friends, parents, and teacher. But when initiated, they were intended to address an imaginary audience of subscribers. The extension outward from writing that was purely instrumental to social and academic life at home or at school to writing intended for an absent and largely unknown audience was an extension of the notion of writing as community participation that was not seen in the elementary classroom. It more closely resembles some aspects of adult literacy. Perhaps the closest that students in Room 12 came to such an enterprise was in writing to pen pals--and here we saw that making one's audience real and concrete was integrally related to the success of the project.

Thus it can be seen that the Magazine Project built upon the Life Books not only in terms of the skills required to complete it

but in terms of the extension and expansion of the definition of audience to include a community beyond the walls of Lincoln School. In completing this writing enterprise, the students were again offered a model, but this time it was the model of magazines of former students. Using magazines of authors unknown to the students reinforced the notion that magazines can be addressed to an audience separated from the reader by time, distance, and experience.

As the case studies illustrate, the integration of skills and building of complexity in occasions for writing continued throughout the year and in the sixth-grade classroom. A culminating occasion for writing--the Research Project--occurred late in the year. It epitomized writing as academic performance and, as such, shed light on the nature of formal evaluation of writing in Mrs. Anderson's class.

While evaluation of writing was present in academic writing across the year in the elementary classroom in such subjects as reading and science, that evaluation was largely implicit. Grades explicitly for writing were never introduced in writing in the second/third-grade classroom. In addition, as was mentioned earlier, the writing which engaged students most directly in the composing process (writing to know oneself and others) was never formally evaluated by Ms. Donovan.

In the sixth grade, however, the picture was quite different. Indeed, all writing except the recreational kind was graded by Mrs. Anderson. The case studies point out that evaluation was an enterprise that Mrs. Anderson found both essential and thorny. In many cases her evaluation was in terms of largely unstated criteria. Her

inferences about student competence in discrete writing skills was cumulative and not framed precisely. However, in early spring students undertook the longest extended occasion for writing when they prepared their Research Project. In this occasion we observed for the first time the explication of evaluative criteria by Mrs. Anderson, the negotiation of those criteria with the students, and the holding of students accountable in terms of them. Much like the explicitly academic writing in Room 12 (which was the only writing to be directly evaluated by Ms. Donovan), student composing in this evaluated activity was constrained in ways different from the previous occasion for writing. In writing to participate in community or to know oneself and others, students had the greatest autonomy to compose and format their written work. The composition and format of writing in the research project, in contrast, was largely in the hands of Mrs. Anderson--a striking parallel to the predominance of publisher-made materials shaping the writing to demonstrate academic competence in the second/third grade. In the next chapter these and other features of occasions for writing will be considered as they bear on curriculum, instruction, and future research in writing instruction.

CHAPTER 6

IN CONCLUSION: PICTURES OF A PROCESS

Introduction

This study was conceived and conducted in the spirit of discovery. Its aim was to describe the writing undertaken in two classrooms and the teaching attendant to it. The combination of anthropological, psychological, and practical perspectives was found to be a powerful and flexible way of working to craft these descriptions. This work represents only one of many useful approaches to research on writing and writing instruction. Correlational studies, surveys, and experiments can also make contributions to knowledge about the acquisition of written literacy. As the corpus of research grows and is shared and reviewed, we shall come closer to the goal of understanding writing in school.

In concluding this report, one caution is warranted. This caution applies to all educational research that is broadly descriptive, whether that research be ethnographic or correlational in nature. The caution pertains to the tendency in educational research to draw implications for teaching and policy uncritically from descriptions of current practice. The potential strength of descriptive research lies in its rendering of analytic portrayals of the complex activities of teaching and learning and of the sense-making of participants in those activities. But descriptions are not uncomplicated. They are static attempts to represent processes that change in time. They are, in addition, neither value-neutral renderings of "what is,"

nor are they facile roadmaps for "what ought to be."

When we study schooling, we describe everyday life and practice within the context of a social institution governed by shared norms and values. Thus statements of fact about life in such settings as schools and classrooms are statements meaningful in terms of the norms and values held there. Our descriptions of teaching and learning in school settings thus presuppose the institution in which the behaviors arise and the rules that regulate those behaviors and make them meaningful. It is in virtue of this state of affairs that our "mere descriptions" are already somewhat evaluative even as we render them, and that they are turned so conveniently into prescriptions for practice (Searle, 1964).

Critics of mainstream educational research have pointed out that failure to recognize the normative nature of the descriptions we devise can lead to uncritical acceptance of the underlying rules presently governing practice, and hence to their unreflective perpetuation by the very act of studying them (Cherryholmes, Note 13). From description we may be tempted to offer heavy-handed recommendations for practice. But the principles of practice documented in one educational setting may be inappropriate to the local and particular perspective of participants in another (Hymes, Note 14). If handled unreflectively, our accumulating corpus of research on instruction is unlikely ever to lead to a normative theory of education--one that stands back from research findings and asks questions ultimately about what is worth knowing (Fenstermacher, 1978).

At a time when we are just beginning extensive research on the teaching and learning of writing, it is worth asking ourselves what

we mean by literacy. What are we willing to count as writing? What do we assume is the teacher's role in the process of acquisition of writing? What resources are available and for whom in enabling the process? Descriptive research cannot answer fundamental value questions for parents, teachers, or policy makers beyond reification of the status quo. Nor can it offer simple and direct prescriptions for practice. What it can offer are pictures of the complex processes at work in schooling and the acquisition of written literacy (Wittgenstein, 1953/1968). These pictures are, of course, limited because they are abstractions. As such they freeze ongoing action in order to describe it. In addition, to be sensible, they must be constructed like caricatures, delineating certain features and demonstrating overall patterns. Thus they must be drawn from one particular point of view and not another (Erickson, 1973). But, like pictures, they are of value despite their limitations. For the inexperienced, they share situations which may be heretofore unknown or difficult to observe at firsthand. For the experienced, they provide much food for thought; a chance to examine their own unique but related experiences.

In this study we have attempted to draw such pictures of processes. We have not focused on products. We have not, for example, regarded student writing as a product in isolation from the social and academic processes that engendered it. Nor have we regarded teaching behavior as a mere product or output. We have considered teacher actions in light of teacher thought and in the context of classroom life. We have looked at instruction as a process--the

dynamic and collaborative creation of teacher and students in a particular setting. Thus our study has reflected truly local norms governing writing and its instruction. But by examining our pictures of writing and its instruction in two classrooms, the reader may learn about a process heretofore obscure or may find the opportunity to think about her/his own situation. She or he may be surprised that her/his experience is quite different, nod knowingly at a familiar episode, agree or disagree with our interpretations, find our renderings satisfying or incomplete. In short, the reader may find these descriptions the occasion for reflection upon her/his own work. And, with the gradual accumulation of such local portrayals, by means of comparison and contrast, the generic may be illuminated in the particular.

In this spirit we offer in concluding this report reflections on issues in practice, curriculum, and research as they relate to writing. These reflections are prompted by what we learned in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

Implications for Practice

One way to characterize curriculum is, in Eggleston's (1977) words, as "a body of learning experiences responding to a societal view of knowledge that may not always be fully expressed or even fully accepted by teachers and students" (p. 20). It was not until this study was well underway that the researchers realized that to study the processes of teaching and learning writing in the classroom was, in fact, to study the writing curriculum. Thus, it was a long time before the teachers and researchers

in dialogue with one another discovered the curricula for writing embedded in everyday activities in the classrooms of Ms. Donovan and Mrs. Anderson.

Perhaps because writing instruction in East Eden, unlike instruction in other school subjects, lacks a "received" and highly standardized system of objectives and materials, it is easy to assume that it lacks a curriculum. But as Eggleston's characterization indicates, curriculum may exist without full consensus about or full expression of the structure and contents of knowledge, the appropriate ways to impart knowledge, the persons to whom it should be taught, the means to evaluate such efforts, or the values underlying its instruction.

In large part we have found that this state of affairs characterized the writing curriculum in the two classrooms studied. While the nature of the curriculum was different in the elementary and the middle school settings, it was, in both cases, largely unarticulated. Free of the materials and precise district mandates that both supported and limited instruction in other academic subjects, writing posed both a problem and an opportunity for the teachers and students whom we observed.

It is possible that relative freedom from outside management of curriculum makes writing the last bastion of independent decision-making among school subjects. Potentially it is still an area in which teachers can make fundamental choices about the knowledge to impart, the ways to impart it, the nature of assessment, and the reasons for learning. But it is also possible for such lack of

specification of the curriculum to be a source of problems. Teachers may enact writing instruction unreflectively--filling up the time with activities that merely recapitulate their own limited experiences as former students of writing. Worse, such an unregulated part of the course of study can suffer for lack of legitimacy. Thus we sometimes see writing slighted in a busy school day or passing unremarked upon as it is used throughout the day as a means to other academic ends.

The absence of curricular materials in writing has engendered a paradoxical situation with respect to writing instruction. On one hand, research on the teaching of writing portrays teachers engaging in some of their most creative and rich preactive and interactive planning precisely because they lack the curricular and managerial props and constraints that materials would provide (Clark & Elmore, Note 11). However, much of that creative instruction is invisible--to analysts, to students, and to teachers themselves. The invisibility happens in at least two ways. First, teachers often engage students in writing that is incidental to the completion of other academic tasks and miss, in their efforts to complete those tasks, opportunities to draw student attention to the important aspects of the very writing processes they are using. The other source of the invisibility of writing instruction lies in the nature of classrooms as places in which to study and communicate with others. Writing is ubiquitous in classrooms, although explicit writing instruction may not be. Writing of papers and tests can become such a part of everyday life in classrooms that it goes unremarked upon by its

users. Thus the powerful potential of writing in use in everyday school life goes unexploited such that it is neither addressed in teacher preparation nor accounted for in curricular descriptions; it is not even counted as writing and writing instruction by educators, children, or parents. Yet it is precisely this everyday use of language that is at the heart of the process of becoming a competent communicator.

This state of affairs makes writing a strategic site for curricular research. In addition, writing is a school subject that potentially calls forth considerable professionalism in teachers. In undertaking writing instruction they may find themselves having to reflect upon their own experience as writers, the lives of their diverse students and the role of writing in them, the opportunities for becoming literate in their classrooms, the problems of standards in writing, and our societal definitions of and values about literacy.

As we considered the implications of this study for the practice of teaching writing, we realized that the occasions for writing described in this report have spoken to the question "why is school writing difficult to teach?" It is our hope that by answering this question, at least in part, teachers and other practitioners will better understand and be better equipped to rise to the challenge of teaching writing. Teaching writing will never be easy. But we believe that understanding how and why fostering the acquisition of written literacy in schools is difficult will be useful to those who seek to help the process along.